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MARY GRAHAM.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By LAURA JANE CURLING.

VOL. II.

"Aide-toi, et le ciel t'aidera."

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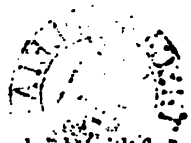
MARY GRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.



The braes are bright with flowers,
  The mountain streams
Foam past me in the showers
  Of sunny gleams,
But the light hearts that cast
  A glory there
In the rejoicing past,
  Where are they? Where?

R. Miller.

The sun shone brightly in at Mary's little window on the following morning, and the song of the lark, carolling his sweet morning

hymn of praise was the sound that met her ears on awaking from her slumbers. Her first thought too was a happy one. "Archie is here, Archie will be with us to-day." But she started as on glancing toward the little table by the side of her bed, she perceived a letter directed in his well-known handwriting, "For my fondly loved sister." A sickening feeling of apprehension stole over her as she stretched out her hand to reach the letter. What could Archie have to say that he was unable to inform her of himself? then as the remembrance of his strange, gloomy manner on the preceding evening, of his last passionate embrace rushed back on her mind, a fear of she knew not what terrible calamity seized her, and she gazed on the letter with wild, terrified eyes. With a desperate effort, she unfolded it with a trembling hand. "My dearest, my ever dear sister," were the first words that met her eyes. Those well-known characters; how often she had gazed on them with happiness and delight, how welcome had the

sight of that dear handwriting ever been to her; now it was to be the means of striking a blow to his fond sister's heart, which would take away all happiness and joy for many a long day. She read on, though the words seemed to stand out in fiery, confused colours before her straining eyes. "Forgive me, forgive me for the step I have taken without consulting you. I knew well that you would all oppose and think it madness on my part, but if you knew the climax to which my unhappiness had reached, the misery of my situation, you would not be surprised at my freeing myself at any cost. Mary, I have enlisted as a private in a regiment now on the point of quitting England for India; indeed when you read this, I shall be perhaps already on my way thither. You see I shall not disgrace you by remaining in this country. No! that I would never do! But my mind is made up, my resolution fixed, to enter the army, though it be as a common soldier at first. I shall get promoted out in India, never fear.

You will hear of me having performed some valiant feat of heroism, that will cause you to be proud of your brother. Oh! Mary, mother, forgive me, though this news will cause you pain at first, still believe it is better, indeed it is, than for me to go on the way I have been doing, in hopeless, miserable drudgery. If you knew half the wretchedness I have endured, you would pity me. I have not left Mr. Williams in disgrace, but informed him some time back of my wish to leave at this time. I received the money due to me three days back and quitted him and his house for ever. Do not write to him to learn farther particulars concerning me. He knows nought of my movements, but concludes, I believe, that I am now at home. I shall already be far away when you read this. It would be useless for you, therefore, to try and alter my resolution. Farewell, mother, Mary, Ernest. —The tears that blot this paper are not those of regret for the step I have taken. No, they fall only because I feel, oh! how deeply, the

agony of separation from you all. My best loved ones, once more farewell, farewell."

Mary dropped the letter from her hands, and raised her eyes in mute, tearless agony towards heaven. Oh! was it thus all her prayers for his welfare were to be answered, thus all the expectations she had formed for the future were to be fulfilled!

"Oh! Archie, Archie, Archie!" she exclaimed, "how can you thus break my heart? Where are you now? Far away you say, cruel, infatuated boy? Oh! can it be that it was indeed your last kiss, the last good bye!" And burying her face in the pillows, the unhappy sister gave way to a burst of passionate, uncontrollable grief. It seemed to her then that God had indeed forsaken them. That beloved younger brother, for whom she would so gladly have given up her own happiness, so that he was shielded from pain, would, and she shuddered as she thought, be subjected to hardships and humiliations of which he had no idea. Too well she knew the difficulties

and sufferings attendant on a soldier's life. To think that the Archie, so cherished and cared for, would be condemned to the society of coarse, illiterate men, from whom he would recoil with disgust and horror. Could it be, was it indeed too late? There came a faint, glimmering hope over the dark wretchedness of her soul. Could they but overtake him, he might yet be induced to relinquish his mad project, and they would willingly, oh! how willingly, spend their last farthing to procure his discharge. No sooner did the idea of yet saving him cross her mind, than she gave no more time to the indulgence of her tears or lamentations, but dressed herself with frantic haste, and hastened to descend the stairs. Oh! the unutterable pang of seeing the room, the very chair where he had sat but the evening before. She could almost fancy she saw him yet. The tall, slight, yet boyish figure, his head supported on his hand, the dark curls falling negligently over his forehead, and his eyes bent in moody, melan-

holy abstraction on the ground. Had she, ah! had she but known the real reason of that melancholy and dejection! It would not then have been too late. Too late—the thought was agonising. No, it could not, should not be. But she hesitated as to the best course to pursue. Mrs. Graham had not yet risen; she need not know at present. Should she meanwhile write to Ernest, and beg him to come to them without delay, or immediately set off herself without farther loss of time in search of Archie. But then what clue had she as to where he was at the present moment; whither should she direct her steps? Her brain seemed in a whirl, and tottering to a seat, she pressed her hands convulsively to her throbbing brow, trying in vain to still the tumultuous agony of thought. She was aroused from the stupor of despair and misery into which she had fallen by the sound of some one descending the staircase. Her heart beat with anxious apprehension, for she knew that at that moment, with all her efforts, she could not so

far command herself as to hide the truth from her mother's enquiring eyes, and with what terrible force the blow would fall on that mother's loving heart, even though the tidings were communicated with the utmost caution and tenderness, she knew full well by her own feelings. It was a relief to her to see only the face of the faithful old Martha. Any one to consult, to relieve her of the inexpressible torture of bearing her misery alone, any one to whom she could unreservedly confide the truth, was at that moment welcome.

"Miss Mary!" began the old servant, in astonishment at the sight of her young mistress at so early an hour. "Well, you are up betimes this morning; I had no thoughts of seeing any one down stairs yet;" then as she advanced nearer, and noticed the ghastly pallor of Mary's countenance, and her tear-swollen eyelids, she exclaimed in alarm, "What is the matter? Dear, dear Miss Mary, what has happened?"

Mary opened her parched, feverish lips to

answer, but the words died away on her faltering tongue, and she could only gasp forth hoarsely the name of Archie.

"Mr. Archie—what about him, Miss? He is sleeping still safe and sound, I warrant, in his little room upstairs. What can have worried you so about him?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mary, passionately, wringing her hands in agony, "do not talk about him being still here, still sleeping peacefully, or I shall go mad. He is gone, Martha, left us, perhaps for ever; enlisted in a regiment, which is going to India. Oh! what shall I ever do! my aching, aching heart!" and pressing her hands to her side, as if, indeed, her heart were well nigh broken, the unhappy girl paced wildly up and down the room.

Tears, genuine tears of sympathy and distress rose to the faithful old servant's eyes, as she listened to her young mistress's frantic explanation of her trouble.

"Don't fret so, dear Miss Mary, pray don't. We will think if something can't be done to

win him back to ye. Enlisted! Dear, dear, what a mad, wild thing for a young gentleman like him to do. And gone this very night, too, without ever wishing ye good bye! But there, we won't waste our time a wondering and talking, but set to thinking what we had best do. There's Mr. Ernest, Miss, you had better write to him at once, don't you think? He'll find him out if e'er a body can. Poor young gentleman, what a sad blow it will be to him, too, to hear such news; Well, I am sure, as it says in the Scriptures, 'We little think what even a day'll bring forth.' To think of Mr. Archie ever giving ye all such shocking trouble as this!"

"Ah! Martha, so as I trusted he would one day be our greatest pride and comfort!"

"Well, well, Miss, he may be yet. Don't quite give up hope. Do you mean to write to Mr. Ernest, or not, Miss Mary?"

"Why a letter will take some time to reach him, you see, Martha, and every hour is of consequence, for Archie says in his note he

shall soon be far away. Oh! if I could but know where to go, where he now is, I would start at once myself, and beg and pray of him on my knees to return to us."

"Ah! Miss, there's the pity. You can't go after him, you see, without knowing his whereabouts a little. I'm but a poor body to advise you what to do or say, but I've just thought that perhaps that kind gentleman, Mr. Newham, who is such a friend to you, might be able to put you in the way of doing something to save Mr. Archie."

"Oh, yes—yes—Martha. Thank you—thank you for that happy thought. I will go immediately—without further loss of time."

And hastily taking her hat down from the peg, where she had hung it on the preceding evening, Mary prepared at once to depart.

"Be very careful not to wake mamma, Martha," she said whilst she gently opened the door leading into the garden. "I shall not be very long gone, and it is quite early

yet. She will not be about for some time to come, if she is not disturbed."

The old servant promised faithfully to obey her parting injunction, and with a murmured "God bless and prosper you, Miss!" reclosed the door, gazing sadly and tearfully after her young mistress's retreating figure.

Mary hastened through the little garden, not daring to look at the rustic bench, where they had all sat together the night before, and closing her eyes with a shudder as they fell on the sweet flowers, which his hands had watered, and his eyes had gazed upon perhaps for the last time. The sweet morning fanned her fevered cheeks, the birds warbled around her, all things seemed in their bright beauty and gladnesss almost a mockery of her own deep misery and grief, of the cry which burst forth from her agonized heart:

"Where, oh where are you, Archie, my brother?"

All around her might be blooming and fair,

what was it to her, if the form so beloved, so idolized was gone from her sight, if she should hear no more the voice, which was the sweetest music to her ears! With what different eyes do we gaze on the beauties of earth, sky, or sea, if our hearts are heavy with grief! All ceases to charm; the brightest objects, the most charming prospect is gazed upon with indifference. Mary hurried along, each moment seeming an age to her excited fancy, so impatient was she to reach the place of her destination.

"Is Mr. Newham up yet?" she enquired eagerly of the astonished maid servant, as arrived as length at her friend's abode, she stood trembling within the passage.

"Yes, miss, he is in the study. I will tell him you are here," and ushering Mary into the drawing room, the maid left her to acquaint Mr. Newham of her arrival.

She had not long to wait, for scarcely two

minutes elapsed ere the door opened, and Mr. Newham made his appeaaance.

"An early visitor indeed, Miss Graham," he began gaily, but stopped short on observing her pale, anxious countenance. "I trust nothing unusual has occurred," he added gravely, kindly taking her hand and leading her to a seat.

Mary could not reply, but placed Archie's letter in his hands.

Mr. Newham read it through without pause or comment, then turned to the trembling girl beside him, saying with a reassuring smile:

"Don't distress yourself so deeply at this foolish boy's rash act of imprudence, my dear Miss Graham; it is not quite so impossible to overtake him as he has here given you to understand (laying his finger on the letter). I know quite well that it is absolutely impossible for any recruit to proceed on foreign service, without first being properly drilled,

and going through the usual, indispensable preparation, which every soldier must do before proceeding to India. Doubtless he gave you this false information that you might be led to suppose he was out of reach of any attempt on your part to discover the place of his retreat. The regiment into which he has enlisted may be on the point of quitting England, but he cannot be with it. He will be left behind with other recruits, to go through the necessary drill before joining the rest."

"Thank God!" ejaculated Mary fervently, "then he may yet be discovered and saved. How would you advise us to proceed in order to discover where he now is?"

"It will be rather a difficult matter, I am afraid," said Mr. Newham, thoughtfully. "You see he has given you no idea whatever of the regiment to which he belongs, and it will be therefore rather puzzling to discover where or to whom to apply for information concerning him. However, I have little

doubt but that you will ultimately discover him, for (as I said before) it must necessarily be several months before he leaves England. What a very sad affair it is!" he added compassionately. "Poor, thoughtless boy, to bring you into such trouble! He speaks in a very determined way, too, in regard to his future plans. I trust he may indeed be prevailed upon to relinquish this mad project."

"Oh! yes, yes!" answered Mary, eagerly. "If we can once find him, we shall, I am sure, be able to make him view things in their proper light, and I would do anything, give up everything to make him happy."

"Ah!" said Mr. Newham, gravely, and with some emotion; "you women shame us men, Miss Graham, by your disinterested, noble generosity. You bear anything for the sake of those you love, whilst we too often (as in the case of this headstrong young brother of yours), give way at the first onslaught, and repay your self-sacrificing affection by increasing your troubles, and committing some rash

act of folly. I am deeply, deeply grieved to hear this sad news. Such additional trouble and expense you are ill able to bear. You know, I am sure, that if I can aid you in any way whatever, I shall be most happy to do so. I would advise you to write at once to your eldest brother, and when he is arrived, he and I will talk the affair over, and see what is the first best thing to do. Meanwhile rest assured, that he is not (as you before supposed), entirely beyond your reach, but is, in all probability, not very far off at the present moment."

"Thank you, oh! thank you, for your kindness," murmured Mary, gratefully, rising to depart. "God will reward you and yours, I am sure, for your ready sympathy and aid to all who are in trouble."

"Now, hush, dear Miss Graham, I do not deserve such warm praises. I am anything but disinterested, for I shall, but act towards you, as you did once to us, when we were in deep affliction." His own voice faltered as he added, "I shall ever feel a regard and inter-

est, in one for whom my lost Ellie felt so deep an affection. Between friends there should ever be a mutual willingness to give aid and comfort, when most needed; therefore, I trust, I shall hear no more mention of gratitude, Miss Graham; indeed, I have as yet done nothing for which I deserve thanks."

Mary raised her tearful, glistening eyes to his, as she answered:

"Nevertheless, in spite of what you have just said, I shall, and must ever continue to feel deep gratitude to you and dear Mrs. Newham, for your sympathy in all our troubles. I will write to Ernest at once, and he will, I trust, be with us to-night." And returning the warm, cordial shake of the hand extended to her, Mary took her leave, greatly comforted by the knowledge that Archie could not (at all events leave England for some months to come), and resolved in the meantime, in spite of all obstacles to discover the place of his retreat.

CHAPTER II.

Could ye foresee your spirit's broken wings,
Earth's brightest triumphs what despised things,
Fast gathering darkness, and fast waning light,
Oh, could ye see it all, ye might, ye might
Cower in the dust, unequal to the strife,
And die, but in beholding what is life.

BUTLER.

"IF you will look from this window, sir, into the yard below, you will see whether he is amongst these that we have here."

The speaker, a little man, about thirty years of age, in a sergeant's uniform, stood at one of the windows looking out into a barrack-yard, in Dublin, and the person, to whom he addressed these words, was Ernest Graham, who, after a fruitless search of several weeks

for his fugitive brother, had succeeded at last in discovering, that the head-quarters of the regiment into which he had enlisted, were in Dublin. Thither, therefore, he had directed his steps, and now stood anxiously trying to discover amongst the different forms and faces of the soldiers collected in the court beneath, the well-known figure and features of Archie. He turned at length from the window, with a deep sigh.

"Not there," he said sorrowfully, "disappointed again."

"Don't quite give up yet, sir; there is a young man here, I know, who exactly answers the description you have given of your brother, though under a different name from what you say. He is not amongst these, I see now, but if you will step into the little room yonder, and take a seat, I will find him out, and send him to you. It can do no harm your seeing whether it is the right one."

Ernest thanked him for his kind offer, and going into the adjoining room, anxiously

awaited the arrival of the young soldier. Five minutes elapsed, yet no one came to disturb his solitude. At length, however, a hesitating step resounded in the long corridor; it advanced nearer and nearer, the door opened, and Archie, in the undress usually worn by soldiers whilst engaged in their duties within the barracks, stood before him. The brothers gazed at each other for a moment in silence.

"Archie!" at length said Ernest, in a low tone of suppressed emotion, and advancing towards him.

For one moment there seemed a struggle in Archie's breast as to whether he should maintain the air of proud reserve, which he had assumed on first entering the room; but Ernest's grave, sad, half reproachful look, and his name uttered once more by the familiar voice, appealed too strongly to the warmest, best feelings of his heart. With a cry, almost sob, he sprang forward, and the two were once more locked in a fond embrace.

"Oh! Ernest," sobbed Archie, all his newly acquired notions of dignity and manhood forgotten in the deep emotion of the moment. "Oh! Ernest, why have you come? You will only make yourself and me unhappy. You cannot alter my determination; it is fixed, unchangeable."

"Do not say so, dear Archie," said Ernest, entreatingly, "before you have heard all that I have to say against this imprudent step. You have too much good sense and feeling, I am sure, not to see things in a proper light, when convinced of the inevitable consequences of continuing—"

He was interrupted by Archie, who, shaking off the hand which still rested caressingly on his shoulder, with an impatient gesture, exclaimed passionately:

"Ah! this is what I was afraid of. I knew it would be all this if you discovered me. Why will you not believe me when I say that I am determined? No arguments whatever can shake my resolution; and, Ernest,

if you had endured what I have, you, too, would act as I am now doing, and as I know, am sure, is for the best. If you were to buy me off to-morrow, I would enlist again. Look at the great men, some of the very greatest, who have risen from the ranks. I, too, will show you in time," drawing up his slight figure proudly, "that I can make my way as well as others. What I suffered as an usher, I repeat, you can have no idea of. The wearing, daily miseries; not daring to punish, however much insulted, because Mr. Williams forsooth would not offend his rich pupils on account of a poor usher. And so it would have been always; I have had experience enough of such a life. Ernest, Ernest, you have your troubles, but they are not so hard to bear as mine were."

The elder brother smiled sadly and bitterly as he answered:

"You know not the struggles, the—the—" his voice faltered, "the disappointment and sorrow of my lot. You would not speak thus

if you knew all. Oh! my brother, truly it is said, 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness.' We all have our trials, our secret griefs, the full anguish of which, we ourselves alone know; yet, Archie, it is our duty to bear all with patience, knowing that God, in his good time, will take away the burden that oppresses us. Never ought we madly to struggle and rebel, or of ourselves try (as you are now doing) desperately against our convictions of right and wrong, some bye path deviating from the straight road of rectitude and duty. If you had but gone on patiently for a few years longer, I am sure you would have been rewarded, and in the end would very likely have gained your wish of entering the army in a very different way to what you are now doing. My dearest brother, you do not surely think that our lives in this world are one sunshiny, cloudless scene of happiness. Oh! no. Ask those who seem to have so fair a lot, on whom all things seem to smile, ask them if it has been ever thus, if no cloud of grief or

sorrow has ever darkened their homes and hearts. They will turn away from you, perhaps, in tears as they relate some sad story of suffering and woe; or even tell you that what seems so fair an outside, is but a vain show, and that there is a cankering grief, a terrible trouble, of which you had little dreamed. Oh! return to us, Archie; give up your present scheme of happiness, which will only end in misery and disgrace. Struggle still a little longer with us in the path of duty, and God will help and reward you, will not let you despair whilst you are acting right. There have been some few instances of great heroes, who, as you say, made themselves a name, and became renowned in the book of fame, but how few, how very few are they compared with the thousands who necessarily must continue the same all their lives. There will come a time when you will bitterly regret (as many a one has done before you) the course you have now so heedlessly, blindly chosen as the right one. If you could not put up

with the petty troubles and difficulties of a teacher's life, how will you be able to endure the degradation and humiliation now in store for you. With your pride, Archie, can you think calmly of being looked down upon by your equals, and considered as one whom a gentleman would lower himself by associating with? Consider all this, dear boy, without mentioning our pain and grief, if you thus blight your prospects."

And once more Ernest laid his hand tenderly on his brother's shoulder, and gazed entreatingly on the flushed, agitated face which was partly averted from him.

"I was prepared for all this, Ernest; as I said before, I knew what arguments you would use to prevail on me to give up my project, and therefore I wished to spare you the pain of hearing, and myself of giving, a final refusal."

"Refusal, Archie, impossible! you cannot mean what you say. Oh! think of the anguish it will cause them at home when I take

such bad news back to them as this. How can you thus grieve the loving hearts of your mother and sister?"

"Ernest, I will not stay to listen to reproaches when I know that I am in the right. I am old enough now to judge for myself. It is cruel to try and shake me in my purpose by thus appealing to my feelings—I cannot bear it!" and burying his face in his hands, the young soldier wept convulsively.

"If your resolution is indeed still unchanged after all that I have said, Archie," answered Ernest mournfully, "then I will entreat no more. I do not wish to embitter the few minutes that we can spend together by useless discussion, and unavailing arguments. Only one thing I wish to ask you. Surely before quitting your native land, perhaps for ever, you will take leave of your mother and sister. What message am I to take to them?"

"Tell them all that I have said, and give them my best—best love. I will write before leaving England and let you know, that you

may all come and see me before I go. And yet," he added regretfully, "what an expense it will be, your coming so long a distance as this."

"Don't think of that, Archie," answered Ernest, almost reproachfully, "do you think we shall grudge money spent in bringing us to pay a last farewell visit to our so fondly loved brother. Oh, no! you will have our blessings and prayers wherever you may be. You have not estranged our love, Archie, but if I were to say that you had not deeply grieved us, it would be false, and you would know it to be so."

Archie's lip quivered as he answered:

"I know I have grieved you now, Ernest, but you will see in the end it will all be right."

Ernest smiled sadly, but made no further remark. He saw now but too plainly that any attempt on his part to alter the determination of the infatuated boy would be worse than useless. It would only occasion alterca-

tion and dispute, perhaps end in estranging and alienating Archie's affections from him. That he could not bear, and therefore after a short conversation on other indifferent matters, from which, with all their efforts, they could not entirely banish a certain constraint and embarrassment, he parted from him with a heavy heart, Archie repeating his promise of writing to let them know when he was ordered to rejoin his regiment.

Poor Ernest! Thus had ended the interview, from which he had hoped so much, thus the long wearisome search, the fruitless enquiries, which had occupied him during the last dreary month of anxiety and suspense. His heart sank within him as, tired and wretched, he at length, on the second day after his interview with Archie, once more approached his home. What would be their feelings when they learnt that his efforts had been in vain, that he had indeed found, but not recovered the lost one.

Mary was seated at the window, at work,

but every now and then she raised her eyes anxiously to the little garden gate. At the sight of Ernest a faint cry escaped her—

"Mamma—He is come, back, Ernest!" she exclaimed; "God grant he may bring us some news of Archie," and hastily throwing down her work, in another moment she was by his side. He anticipated the question, which her trembling lips refused to utter.

"I have found him, darling, but he refuses to return."

"Refuses to return! Archie refuse to return to us! Oh! Ernest, you cannot mean it. Did you tell him all the disgrace, our wretchedness, the misery, all, all did you tell him?"

"I did, Mary, I implored, entreated him, used every argument, but in vain. But do not blame him too severely. He thinks, poor boy, he is in the right."

"Blame him," said poor Mrs. Graham, who had followed Mary to the door, and had listened with trembling eagerness to Ernest's words. "Blame him, my own darling, my

Archie, who was always such a good, obedient boy! Oh; is it come to this, that any one should talk of blaming him! He will come back, Ernest, if I, his mother, ask him! I will go, at once. In Ireland, is it not? You must tell me where he is, Ernest, and I will go, and bring him back, dear boy. I shan't mind the journey, and I have just received my quarter's money. I shall take it with me, to buy his discharge."

"Dear mamma," said Mary, her tears falling fast, as she listened to the fond mother's eager defence of her child; "I am afraid now all your efforts would be in vain. If Ernest has failed, we cannot hope to succeed. Come in, dear Ernest, and tell us all about him. Where is he, how is he looking?"

Ernest gave them a full account of the conversation between himself and Archie, and even Mrs. Graham was compelled to own, that every effort had been made to prevail on him to return.

"My boy! my boy!" she exclaimed, weep-

ing piteously; "what will become of him. He will never see his poor mother again if he goes away. No never. And to India! Why, the climate will kill him. He is not strong, not at all strong. The trouble I had with him when he was a little thing. I thought I should never rear him. Such a darling he was then, too. I little thought he would ever bring such trouble on us all!" and thus moaning and weeping; sometimes blaming, sometimes defending her darling son, Mrs. Graham passed the greater part of the evening after Ernest's return.

Poor Mary wept long and silently over the final destruction of her hopes. Her thoughts reverted to the past; she thought of the merry, light-hearted boy, to whose return home, she had always looked forward with such delight, of his affectionate, endearing ways; and her heart swelled well nigh to bursting, as she pictured the void, the terrible blank there would be henceforth in their little circle. That miserable evening how long it seemed, how wearily

the hours dragged by to each of the sorrowing inmates of "the Cottage!"

Poor old Martha, to whom Mary had communicated the sad news, when she appeared for prayers, on entering the room, burst into tears, exclaiming:

"Oh! Missis, pray forgive me, but, I really can't help it! To see Mr. Archie's empty seat, and to think that I shall not see him again for many a long year, perhaps never, this side the grave. The little curly-headed boy, as I've held him in my arms many and many a time. It well nigh breaks my heart, it does," and covering her face with her apron, the faithful old servant fairly sobbed aloud.

"We will all unite in prayer for him this evening, Martha," said Ernest drawing the old family Bible towards him; "we will pray, that he, so dear to all our hearts, may be preserved in danger and temptation, and may be restored to us at last, wiser, better than now."

"Ah! do, do, Mr. Ernest, it will make me

feel easier-like to hear you pray for him, as you always do, so beautifully."

And beautiful indeed, in its deep, earnest eloquence and touching simplicity, was the prayer which ascended to heaven, for, with his very heart and soul did that sorrowing brother lift up his voice in fervent supplication for the wanderer from his home and friends. Could Archie have heard that prayer, and the sobs, which rose from the little group, who on their knees, so earnestly and fervently echoed the "amen" which followed it, surely, surely he would have faltered in the resolution, which was causing them such unhappiness.

But he heard it not; he was far away, and though his thoughts often wandered to that dear home, where he had spent so many happy hours, he consoled himself, with his wild, visionary schemes of future grandeur and glory.

Apart from his fellows, in his solitary pride, and imaginary greatness, he sits musing, indif-

ferent to the many coarse jests and sneers upon his moodiness and abstraction. Ah! indifferent then, because he had bright, cheering hopes within his breast; but how did they fall upon his ears, when those hopes had fled, when with an agonized heart, he pondered in after years on that last meeting with his brother, when he had so madly thrown away the chance still left of deliverance. Too many are there, alas! who like Archie, with all the headstrong obstinacy of impetuous youth, in spite of the counsel and warning of those older and more experienced than themselves, rush determinately on the road, which must inevitably lead to their destruction and ruin.

Would they but listen in time, before it is too late, how much misery they might be spared; with what different feelings would they in after life recall the past in deep thankfulness, that they had escaped those dangerous shoals, on which their life long happiness had been so nearly wrecked.

CHAPTER III.

The world—the breathing world of light and flowers,
To her was fair; no dark'ning shade had passed
O'er her young visions, or no blight of tears
Had o'er her brow a shade of suffering cast.

MRS. WARNER.

IT was about six weeks after Ernest's unsuccessful interview with Archie.

In the same apartment, and but little changed from when the reader last saw her, sat fair Julia Norton, her head leant on her hand, and she was apparently absorbed in thought. Her companion, a young girl about her own age, was seated at the table engaged in copying an exquisitely painted water-coloured

drawing. She looked up somewhat archly and mischievously once or twice, seeming highly amused at her friend's abstraction, then bending her bright face once more over her drawing, she continued her occupation singing in a low voice:

"'Tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round;
And every day, beneath its sway, both young & old are bound."

"Is not that true, Julia?" she asked laughingly. "I'm sure you know what it is to be in love, don't you?"

Julia could not forbear a smile at her friend's merry sally, but it faded away, and her face resumed its thoughtful, saddened look as she answered:

"Yes, I certainly have known for a long time, Amy, what it is to be (as people say) in love, but it was not of Charles or his prospects that I was thinking just then."

"Indeed!" answered Amy merrily. "It is high treason, then, Julia, if you were thinking of anything, or any one else. I am

astonished that, after your long conversation in the garden, you should not be dwelling with fond delight on every tone, word, and look that passed between you."

"You are very merry and happy, dear Amy, and may you always remain so, but there are others who are in sad trouble just now, and I was thinking of them."

"Who—oh! tell me, Julia dear. Any one I know?"

The pencil was thrown hastily back on the table, and the bright, dark eyes were raised enquiringly and anxiously to her friend's face.

"Why, I do not know, Amy, whether I ought to tell even you," answered Julia hesitatingly. "Papa told me in strict confidence, for it is quite a private family affair, and I am sure those whom it concerns most would not like it talked about."

"But one thing, Julia, now you have so raised my curiosity; whom does it concern? You can surely tell me that."

"Ernest Graham, Amy."

"Ernest Graham!"

A bright flush rose to Amy's fair face, as she turned once more towards her drawing.

"I will not ask you to tell me, Julia," she continued, in a low subdued voice, "if you do not think it right to do so, only you know, dear, do you not, that if you did confide it to me, it would never be mentioned again to any one."

"I know, dearest Amy, and I will tell you all about it, as you so wish to know. Papa would not mind your hearing it, I am sure, neither, I think would Ernest Graham himself. Oh! I do feel for him, for them all so much! Only think, Amy, a younger brother they were all so fond and proud of, has actually enlisted as a private soldier, and gone to India. You know a short time back Ernest Graham went away for a month. You thought it was because he was not very well, and wanted a change; but it was not so. He confided it

all to papa then. He was going to try and find his brother, and prevail on him to let them buy him off. Well, he found him at last, but he would persist in remaining as he was, and then poor Ernest came back here. Don't you remember our noticing how much paler and thinner he was, and how sad he seemed. It was because of that. Archie (that is his brother's name) had promised to let them know when he received orders to leave England for India, that they might go to wish him good bye; but imagine their feelings when a week ago, they received a letter from him, saying that the order had come so suddenly, that he had had no time to write, as he had promised, they would not have been able to reach Ireland before he left, and that he was already on his way to India. He was very sorry himself, Ernest told papa he could see by his letter, but that did not make the matter any better. His poor mother and sister are nearly heart-broken at not seeing him again, and Ernest

himself is so miserable. That is why he did not come into the drawing-room last night. He would go away directly after having told papa. It made me so sad to hear it all, and so it did Charles—I told him, of course, for he is a great friend of Ernest Graham's, and besides, I knew I could trust him with any secret. That was what we were talking about so long in the garden last night, dear Amy, not about ourselves as you supposed. Is it not a great trouble for them?"

"Great, indeed." The bright flush had died away on Amy's cheek, leaving it very pale. "I am very sorry to hear Mr. Graham is in such trouble, very sorry indeed!" She rose hastily, and began collecting her drawing materials together. "I am going up-stairs, Julia, to put these things away; when I come down, we will talk more about it."

Julia gazed after her friend's retreating figure in some surprise. "How unlike Amy," she thought, "to speak so coldly and calmly on such a matter as this. I thought she liked

Ernest Graham, too, and would be so interested and shocked."

Julia would not have thought her friend cold and unfeeling, could she have followed her into her room, and seen the hot tears that fell on the drawing she held all unheeded and forgotten in her hand.

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Amy de Vere had returned from Germany about six months before the period, when we resumed our story, and had finally consented (not unwillingly) to make her guardian's house her home, at all events for the present. She was now looked upon more in the light of a dear child and sister, than as a stranger and a visitor, for her sweet, loving disposition had endeared her to all the household. But there was another still greater charm for Amy at the Priory, greater even than her friend's sisterly love, and kind Mr. and Mrs. Norton's affectionate care. Ernest Graham was a frequent visitor at the house, and all too highly

had she learnt to prize his society and conversation. From her father, who was of French origin, Amy had inherited all the grace and vivacity, which rendered her so peculiarly fascinating, but there was a depth and nobleness in her character unseen and unrecognised by the many; only to those to whom she could unhesitatingly display the inmost thoughts and feelings of her heart, did she appear as she really was, a most interesting, noble-minded girl. Her intense admiration of all that was great and good, united to a clear and decided perception of right and wrong, enabled her, young as she was, generally to form a pretty accurate estimate of the characters of those with whom she was thrown. Therefore it is not surprising that the unostentatious piety, and many noble qualities of Ernest Graham, should have been marked and appreciated by her, or that she should have learned at last to value every word, every opinion uttered by him as inestimably

precious, and form her own judgments accordingly.

Brought up by a pious mother, Amy loved and remembered the precepts that mother had so earnestly laboured to instil into her mind. But young and beautiful, with all that wealth could offer to make her life all sunshine and happiness, she had not known as yet the real difficulties, the self-denial attendant on a christian's life. The long conversations she had had with Ernest had opened a newer, nobler field for her exertions. On listening to his high standard of right and wrong, his view of the duties and aims of life, she longed with all the ardent enthusiasm of her warm, young heart, to work and labour as he did for high and unselfish purposes.

She had formed many a scheme for good, many a resolution to benefit others before she had become acquainted with Ernest, but they had mostly failed, partly from her youth and inexperience of the world, partly from the too

imaginative, unreal expectations she had formed, only to be disappointed.

But now thus guided, thus counselled, what would she not perform? Thus half unconsciously had Amy learnt to love whilst she listened and admired; to love with all the devotedness, the unselfishness of a true woman's heart. Bright as the world had appeared to her before, it was brighter now. Her heart was doubly rich in happy anticipations for the future, in which he, the beloved one, was to take so prominent a part, for something whispered sweetly to Amy's heart that she loved not in vain, that he, too, thought of her (all unworthy though she felt herself to be), in a different light to what he regarded others. Else why the watchful solicitude, the tender glance, the books so carefully chosen for her, the flowers arranged for her alone. Oh! yes, he loved her, and her heart was lighter, more joyous even than before, her voice more musical, her step more free, with that delightful consciousness.

It never entered her mind that her wealth would be an insurmountable barrier in Ernest's eyes, that even though he loved, he struggled against that love, and sought to banish her image from his heart, thinking it madness ever to dream of her, the beauty, the heiress, so courted, so caressed by all.

Hopeless, also, was he, in his humility and low estimate of himself, of ever gaining the affection of one so beautiful and admired, as Amy. Poor Ernest! Far from rendering his life brighter, his thoughts less gloomy, the sweet face and form of Amy de Vere rose only before his eyes in bitter mockery of his poverty and position. How dare he, a poor curate, working, struggling on, his sister a daily governess, his brother (ah, that was the last bitter drop in his cup of misery), his brother a common soldier; how dare he ever dream of her! Would she not look on him with contempt? And then when something whispered, that those loving eyes would never look scornfully on him, however poor, that that sweet voice

would never utter words of unkindness or reproach, still the thought would rise of what the world would say; that he had married her for her wealth; even his friends, the Nortons, would think Amy had made a great sacrifice in uniting herself to one so poor and friendless. No, it never could be, and yet,—still did he linger by her side, still gaze in fond admiration at the beautiful face, which so haunted his dreams and imagination. Little did Amy think how fondly the books lent her by him were afterwards treasured and prized; put apart from the rest with jealous care and tenderness, held ever after as precious and sacred, because her eyes had rested on, her hands touched them. Oh! love! love! Thou art a sweet, bright dream to some, because naught disturbs the blissful anticipations, the fond hopes, which render all so radiant and fair. But to those, between whom and the object of their heart's devotion there rises a dark barrier, which seems impassable, unsurmountable, a chasm impossible to cross, how unwelcome a guest art thou, tor-

turing ever with thoughts of happiness beyond their reach, of sweet visions never to be realized at least by them!

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Amy de Vere stood long absorbed in thought, all, everything forgotten in her sorrow and sympathy for him, who had become so dear to her young heart. Could she but comfort him in his trouble, whisper loving words of sympathy for his distress. It was impossible to do so, for would he not see at once that she knew all, think, perhaps, that his confidence in the Nortons had been misplaced, and that his most private affairs were made a subject of every day discussion and gossip. No, it could not be; but oh! would he not confide in her, who loved him so; did he not know, that she too felt an interest in all that concerned him, and would sympathise, oh! how deeply, in his affliction. But perhaps he might yet. Next time they were

alone, she would lead the conversation that way, and then she hoped he would tell her all himself, for with almost a jealous pang Amy learnt that Ernest had kept back his grief from her, had not trusted her with a secret, which concerned him so nearly. Ah! Amy, you would be the last person to whom Ernest would confide the sorrow, the disgrace which had overtaken them, a fresh obstacle, as he considers it, added to the many which already divide him from you and happiness. Even now as he sits alone, sorrowfully musing on the dark, gloomy future which lies before him, Archie's blighted prospects, Mary obliged to labour on to obtain their daily bread, his own ineffectual efforts to obtain preferment and advancement, he contrasts his prospects with yours, and thinks with agony how far apart your paths must inevitably lie.

Whilst he strives in vain to fill the dreary, aching void, which the light of that gladsome presence, that sweet, sympathising voice alone can fill, he prays earnestly for her happiness

and welfare, prays that the one, who will win the treasure of her love may indeed be worthy of her, may foster and encourage those high aspirations after better, nobler things, may cherish and love her as he would have done had it but been his happy fate to have won her for his own.

These are Ernest's despairing thoughts whilst Amy dreams not of aught that can separate them from each other, thinks only with pleasure of the long hours of delightful intercourse, of the time when he will tell her how he loves her, and ask her to share his home, and unite with him in aiding and benefiting all around.

"Julia," she asked anxiously, as after having carefully removed all traces of her recent emotion from her face she rejoined her friend in the drawing-room, "Julia, do you think Mr. Graham will return home again now that his mother and sister are in such trouble?"

"No, Amy, he said not. He told papa

that much as he wished to be able to return for a day or two, he knew it was impossible, for he had had so many holidays lately."

Amy sighed, then after a short pause, resumed. "He has a sister—Mr. Graham, I mean—have you ever seen her?"

"No, but I should think she is a very nice, amiable girl from what I have heard him say about her."

"I should so like to see her!" said Amy musingly.

Julia looked surprised. Her friend did feel more interest then in Ernest Graham and his affairs than she had before supposed.

"Would you, dear Amy? Well I wonder whether it could ever be arranged. I should like to know her too very much, but I have always thought it impossible. Such a long way off St. Alban's, you see."

"Yes, but if we could once get to see and know her a little, you might ask her to stay with us a short time. It would make a little change for her, now she is so dull and un-

happy, and I should like it so much, would not you?"

"Very much indeed. We will see if we cannot get an introduction to her some way or other. How good of you, dear Amy, to be always thinking how you may best make others happy!" exclaimed Julia enthusiastically, looking up admiringly at her friend's eager, animated face.

A deep blush suffused Amy's face as she answered:

"Pray do not think me entirely disinterested, Julia, for I was anticipating a pleasure for myself in making Miss Graham's acquaintance. Did you not tell me once she was a governess?"

"Yes, she gives daily lessons, I believe."

"Oh! Julia! I wish I had not been rich!" exclaimed Amy suddenly, and with some emotion she continued: "for see what a useless, idle life I lead, whilst others are so active and good, and deserve the regard of—of" she stopped abruptly.

"But, Amy dear, you too can do good, can help others much more efficiently with your wealth, than those who, however much they may wish, lack the means of doing so."

"Oh! yes, Julia, but then I do not know the right way to go to work. If I had but some one always to direct me, it would be different, but," sighing, "I have not, and so —and so I wish, with all my heart, that I was poor, like Mary Graham. She is working, doing her duty, whilst I go on only wishing, never performing."

"Amy, darling, you underrate your own good deeds. Only yesterday papa and I were talking about and praising the many kind acts of charity you had done amongst the poor people here. There is James Thompson and his family, in whom Mr. Graham is so interested, bless you for your goodness."

"Ah!" said Amy, eagerly, a thought seeming to strike her, "I have not been to see them for so long a time, they will think I have quite forgotten them. Could we not both go

out after luncheon, Julia, and take poor James some wine and other things? Now he is recovering, he requires more nourishment than they can afford to give him."

Her friend readily consented, and accordingly after partaking of some refreshment they set off for the cottage.

Amy had been greatly interested in this poor family, partly from her own pity and sympathy for them, and partly on account of her knowledge that Ernest Graham thought it a case worthy of attention and aid. The father, a hard-working, industrious man, had been employed for some years in a neighbouring manufactory, but catching a violent cold, which settled on his lungs, he had been laid up for some months past, and was still too weak and ailing to resume his former employment. The family had therefore been reduced to the greatest poverty, often lacking the bare necessaries of life. What rendered their situation even more deplorable was the sad condition of their eldest daughter,

a sweet, engaging girl of thirteen, who had been blind from her birth, and was consequently quite unable to do aught towards her own maintenance, or to render her mother much aid in the care of the house and of her younger brothers and sisters. Amy's tender heart was deeply touched by the poor Thompson's distressing circumstances, and she had done all in her power to assist them with money, and many little delicacies, which the sick man required, and would otherwise have been unable to obtain. On the present occasion the two girls took several articles of food and clothing which they knew would be very acceptable to their poor friends, and Amy amused herself and Julia on the way with anticipations of the pleasure with which they would be received. After about twenty minutes' walk they arrived at the cottage, the door of which was opened by a clean, respectable-looking woman, whose countenance wore the anxious, troubled expression of one on whose mind was a heavy burden of trouble and

care. It brightened, however, at the sight of her visitors.

"Good day to ye, young ladies, the sight of your face, Miss," (addressing Amy), "is always a welcome one to me, but doubly so to-day, for we're in sad trouble. I was even thinking whether you'd think it very bold or a great liberty on my part, if I just walked up to the Priory and told you all about it. But come in pray, though it's a dreary house for such as you to set your foot in."

Julia and Amy accordingly entered the small humble apartment, which—though but scantily furnished—was as neat and tidy as the poor woman herself.

"Sit down, ladies," she said, carefully dusting two chairs and placing them before them. "You must be quite tired, such a long walk as it is. I'm sure, as I was saying to Mr. Graham the other day, I wish there were more such young ladies as you, who do not mind what trouble you take so that you can help us poor folks a bit, when we're in trouble."

"Indeed, Mrs. Thompson," said Amy, handing her the basket they had brought, as she spoke, "I wish we could do more for you. How is your husband to-day?"

"Ah, Miss, that's the sad, sad trouble that has fallen on us. Instead of going on mending, as we hoped, he has got a great deal worse lately. His cough is terrible, and he's as weak as a new born baby. The doctor said this morning, when I asked him what he thought of him, 'Mrs. Thompson, I am very sorry for you, but the truth is the truth, and it's my opinion he'll never mend.' And then he went on to say that it was a low decline, or something o' that sort, and that he must have all the nourishing things I could give him. Four glasses too of port wine a day, he said he ought to have. Well, you may think, Miss, how my heart sank within me at such news. I couldn't forbear sitting down and having a good cry when I thought that it had indeed come to this, and that I must lose my poor

James. And then I began to think whatever would become of us. The last quarter's rent owing, and another soon to pay. Then the number of things poor James would be wanting to keep him up anyhow at all—I really felt, Miss, as if I couldn't even pray for help, I was so heavy hearted and wretched when I thought of it all. But God has sent me help when I was quite despairing, and I bless Him for it. This wine and things you dear young ladies have brought, will last him for some days to come, and then there will be Mr. Graham's allowance to help out when that is gone."

"I am indeed sorry to hear such sad news," said Amy compassionately. "I was in hopes your husband was now nearly well. Does he still see people when they call?"

"Oh! yes, Miss, he always sees Mr. Graham, who often comes to read and pray with him. James so loves to hear the scriptures read, but I have so little time to spare, that I

can seldom get to read a bit to him. It hurts his head, poor thing, to read himself, besides his eyes are too weak for it."

"Do you think he would like me to read to him a little this afternoon?" asked Amy eagerly; "I could return home alone, Julia," turning to her friend.

"Oh! yes, Miss, I'm sure he would be delighted; you are only too good to us all."

"Well, then, I will stop," said Amy, loosening her cloak, and preparing to remain at the cottage. "You go home, dear Julia, for it will never do for you to be kept waiting so long for me. I do not mind in the least coming home alone, and I hope you will not either."

"Oh! no," answered Julia, rising from her seat. "I am sure if you are good enough to stop, Amy, I ought not to grumble about such a trifle as that. Good bye, Mrs. Thompson, I hope sincerely things will change soon for the better. We will arrange about the port wine for you," and after shaking the

poor woman kindly by the hand, and receiving her grateful thanks for her goodness, Julia quitted the cottage.

Amy turned eagerly towards her companion, as the door closed, and they were at length alone.

"What is the amount of the rent you owe, Mrs. Thompson," she enquired.

"£2 10s., Miss, the last quarter, but next week there will be another due."

"Altogether £5. Don't fret about it any more then, for I will pay it for you."

"Oh! my dear, sweet, young lady, how can I thank you enough," said the poor woman, the grateful tears rising to her eyes, as she seized Amy's hand, and pressed it to her lips.

"You can please me most by not saying any more about it," answered Amy; "and now, will you go and tell James, I am ready to read to him?"

Mrs. Thompson hastened up-stairs, and in a minute or two returned, saying, her hus-

band would be only too grateful to her for her kindness. Amy accordingly followed her up the narrow staircase, leading to the sick man's chamber. It was a small, cleanly apartment, at the farther end of which stood the little bed, on which the poor sufferer lay, or rather sat, propped up by pillows, his wan countenance, and sunken eyes, but too plainly indicating the progress of the slow, undermining disease, which must eventually cause his death. He turned his head at the entrance of his young visitor, and extending his hand to grasp the little, delicate fingers, so cordially held out to him, he exclaimed, between frequent pauses for breath:

"God bless you, dear, good young lady! My wife has told me all, and I cannot thank you, as I wish and ought, for—for—" He was interrupted by a violent fit of coughing, which lasted several minutes.

"Now," said Amy, as he once more essayed to speak; "I shall go away, if you thus

excite yourself at seeing me. You must remain perfectly quiet. I am not come to talk, but to read to you," and drawing a chair to the side of the bed, she took up the Bible, laying on a table near her, and after choosing a chapter, which she thought would be interesting to the poor invalid, she commenced reading, in a low, clear voice. It was a beautiful and touching picture. The little room, so meagrely furnished, the pale, patient face of poor James, his eyes fixed in deep attention on the sweet countenance of Amy, who, in her blooming youth and beauty, formed so striking a contrast to the emaciated form beside her. The low, sweet voice read on—"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.

"O! death, where is thy sting? O! grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

She paused, for James started, and uttered a faint exclamation of surprise. A tall figure was standing in the doorway absorbed in the contemplation of the scene before him. At James's exclamation, however, seeing that he could no longer remain unnoticed, Ernest, for it was he, who thus quietly had been observing them, advanced, saying:

"Well, Thompson, how do you find yourself to-day? You have I see obtained a very good substitute in exchange for me," then turning to the startled, blushing Amy, he said, gently, with some emotion in his looks and tone:

"You are very kind, Miss de Vere, thus to spend your leisure hours in reading to the sick. There are very few young ladies, I am sorry to say, who would act thus."

"Oh!" said Amy, blushing still deeper, at such warm praise and from his lips, "I have not been here long, and it is the very first time I have ever read to James, so you see," she

added playfully, "I do not deserve such great commendation after all."

Ernest smiled as he answered:

"Not in your own opinion, perhaps;" then turning to James he continued his enquiries relating to his health, &c. Amy meanwhile turned away towards the window. An exclamation of annoyance escaped her, as she saw that some heavy drops of rain were beginning to fall, and that the sky had assumed a lowering, threatening aspect. So far from home, what should she do?

"I am afraid I shall be obliged to remain here for some time to come," she said, turning once more towards the sick man. "It is beginning to rain very fast, and gives no promise of holding up."

Ernest turned quickly and eagerly towards her.

"I shall not be able to stay very long myself, Miss de Vere, if you will wait a few minutes, my umbrella will be at your service."

"Oh, thank you," answered Amy, "but will it not be out of your way? I should not like to put you to any inconvenience."

"Not in the least, it will be a great pleasure."

It was accordingly arranged that Amy should await Ernest's departure below, he wishing to stay as usual to have a little conversation with James. She therefore meanwhile amused herself with the children who had returned from their walk, chatting pleasantly with the poor blind girl, whose affliction rendered her so peculiarly interesting to Amy's gentle heart.

After about a quarter of an hour spent thus, Ernest re-appeared, and making her final adieus to the poor inmates of the cottage, promising soon to renew her visit, Amy departed, her heart beating tumultuously at the prospect of a long walk with Ernest and alone.

He, too, was happy for a while in her

loved presence, forgetting all but the present delight of the moment—the thrilling touch of the little hand which rested so confidingly on his arm—the being able thus to shelter and protect her for whom he would so willingly have borne any amount of suffering or pain to shield from grief or sorrow. Could it but be thus through life, he thought, as a sharp gust of wind and rain caused her involuntarily to cling closer to his arm for protection and shelter.

"Could I but be always near to guard her from the temptations and evils of the world, which are tenfold more dangerous and hurtful than the fury of the elements."

And then came the thought, too, of how sweet life would be to him thus shared with her—how would they together mourn, together rejoice through all the changing scenes of life, and with the same hope, the same firm trust, together look forward to eternal happiness and rest. Absorbed in his thoughts he did not notice the earnest gaze of the soft

dark eyes raised furtively from time to time to his countenance, till at length she broke the long silence by saying:

"Is it not a sad trouble for the poor Thompsons, Mr. Graham, James' illness, I mean? You have heard, of course, the opinion of the doctor?"

"Yes," said Ernest, rousing himself from his abstraction, and coming back to the every day troubles and realities of the present moment. "Yes, indeed, I am truly sorry to hear that his life will not be spared to his poor wife and children; though as regards James himself, I know it will be a blessed change for him. He is a true Christian, and only this afternoon he told me, poor fellow, with the tears in his eyes, that, were it not for the sorrow of leaving his wife and little ones to struggle on without him, he should rejoice to depart, and be at peace from further suffering."

"How delightful to be able to speak so!" said Amy, musingly. "I could not, I am

afraid, if death were near me. It is wrong, I know, but it has always seemed to me something very dreadful, very awful indeed! I cannot look forward to it as some do without any dread or fear at all."

"It is certainly but a few that can do so," answered Ernest, gravely. "And to the young who see the world before them with so much therein that they think fair and enjoyable, death seems indeed an awful messenger. But as the Christian grows older, as life's bright vision of happiness begins to fade; as sorrow darkens his path, and blights the fair prospect of his earlier days; then he begins to pine and long after that better, happier home, where there is no more grief, no more sin, nothing but endless, endless, peace and joy." He sighed as he continued, "You, Miss de Vere, have as yet seen only the sunshiny side of life, and to you, death seems awful because you are so happy here—have all that can render life lovely. But with some it is not so. There have been moments when I (like poor James)

have wished that my weary pilgrimage were over, and that I and my loved ones were safe from further pain and misery."

Amy's bright eyes filled with tears, for she knew that Ernest had indeed known much sorrow and suffering, and her heart overflowed with sympathy for his distress.

"But there are always some bright spots, some happy days in every one's life," she said cheeringly. "Those that are so prosperous now, have perhaps much future sorrow in store for them. If you have trouble now, Mr. Graham, you will be rewarded, I am sure, in after life, by being made very, very happy indeed."

Ernest smiled sadly, thinking in his own heart that there could be no real happiness for him in this world, if denied the presence of her who had become all in all to him, the dearest earthly object of his affection.

"We will say no more about my happiness or unhappiness, Miss de Vere," he said, somewhat abruptly. "It is pleasanter to me to

hear you talk of yourself. What have you been doing since last I saw you; engaged in similar acts of kindness as that of to-day?"

"No," said Amy, sorrowfully; "indeed, Mr. Graham, I do not deserve to be so praised for just stopping a few minutes longer than Julia to read to a poor sick man, who had no one else to do it for him. Since last I saw you I have been reading, drawing, riding; amusing myself, you see, instead of doing my duty and sacrificing my own will and pleasure for others."

"But," said Ernest, "you have the will, as you have shown to-day. Would you like me to tell you of other families besides the Thompsons deserving of help, whom you could visit occasionally?"

"Oh, yes!" she answered eagerly. "Indeed I should; I do not want to be leading such an idle useless life any longer, Mr. Graham."

"Well then, I will think of some whom I

should like you to visit, and will write down the names, and bring them to the Priory some evening."

Ah! Ernest, why not have given them, as you could well have done then, at the very moment! Still loving but too well the chains which bind you, still linking them closer, faster round your heart?

"Thank you very, very much. What evening do you think you will be able to come?" asked Amy hesitatingly, "it would be a pity if I were not at home, because—because you might have something to tell me about the people in particular."

"Well then, let me see—Tuesday, Wednesday, I am engaged—Thursday—would Thursday suit you?"

"Yes, quite well."

"Then I will come. Good bye till then," for they had reached the Priory.

"Will you not come in? You are so wet."

"No, thank you, not to-day. Once more, good bye.

"Good bye."

A gentle pressure of the little hand held out to him, and they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

But that loved one, who has left
Us of so much joy bereft,
Whom our yearning hearts requir
Whom our aching eyes desire,
After whom our eyes we strain,
Whom we listen for in vain,
For he comes, he comes not back.

"Oh! mamma, I cannot—I cannot; do not ask me, please do not," and Mary pushed her almost untasted breakfast from her with a gesture indicative of a weary sick-heartedness, an utter indifference of all, everything around her.

"Well, Mary, I see how it will be. I shall lose you soon, fretting in this way. I am certainly to have my heart broken by my

wise purpose, yet it seems so very hard!" and poor Mary looked out of the open window, up at the bright blue sky above with a beseeching earnestness in her eyes, as if a mute prayer rose to heaven for comfort and aid in her despondency.

"Well, Mary, I don't think it can last long, for if we go on as we have been doing lately, trouble upon trouble, we shall soon be all in our graves, and then there will be an end of it," said Mrs. Graham, with a most gloomy attempt at cheerfulness. "I should thank God to take me, only," and the poor mother's voice quivered, "I should like to look once more on the face of my boy, and hold him in my arms once more, and then I could die happily, hoping God would pardon all my weakness, all my failings, which I know have been many, very many, for the sake of His Son, who died to save even me, poor, weak, miserable creature as I am!"

"Dear mamma," said Mary, pressing her lips fondly to her mother's cheek, "do not

talk so, I cannot bear it! What would become of your poor Mary, if you left her all alone?"

"Not alone, Mary my child; you would have dear Ernest to comfort you."

"Oh! but, mamma, Ernest (dearly as I love him) could not fill the place of you my mother. What can fill the terrible void in a girl's life, if her mother is taken from her?" She went on speaking hurriedly, and in great agitation. "I know it must be some day, but I trust long years will intervene before that miserable, miserable time."

"Mary, you would feel differently if I left you in a comfortable home with some one to take care of and love you beyond everything else. I pray daily that it may be so, that I may see you rewarded and happy before I leave you. That, and the other fond wish of my heart fulfilled, I could (oh! how willingly) depart."

"Mamma, I do not think it at all likely that I shall ever get married," said Mary, ear-

nestly, a deep blush suffusing her fair cheek as she spoke; "for supposing I did meet with some one I could really love, would it be likely that he would love me, a poor governess, with nothing whatever to recommend her, for, I am sure, whatever beauty I may have once possessed is fast fading away now. Ah! no," she said bitterly, "I have dreamt that foolish dream once; I will not be so easily deceived again."

Mrs. Graham pushed back the bright, wavy ringlets of chestnut hair fondly and admiringly from the pale, sad, young face, which she scanned for a moment before she answered:

"Well, Mary, though you have lost a great deal of your former brightness and freshness, you are still, at all events in my eyes, very pretty and sweet-looking. You cannot help looking pale and mournful, poor child; it would be strange if you looked otherwise after the last three months' wearing anxiety and misery."

"But, mamma, supposing what you say is true, I should not like to be loved for my beauty alone," said Mary quickly.

"No, not, of course, for that alone, but it must have something to do with it, child."

"Well I repeat, I do not think I shall ever be married; and now let us talk of other things. I have something to tell you about the Newhams. I told you the other day, that I could see, that if it were not for depriving me of the weekly sum I have always had from them, they would long ago have sent Lawrence to a boarding school; he is getting too old now to be at home. Well, Mrs. Newham spoke to me about it yesterday afternoon, and asked me if I did not think it would be best for him to be sent away to school. I told her frankly that I thought it certainly would be much the best plan; at the same time you may imagine how sorry I was at the thought of losing the engagement. She saw my thoughts by my face, I am sure, for

she said in her sweet, kind way: 'But don't think we are going to let you run away from us yet, Mary, no, that I hope will not be till you have a happy home of your own, which you will some day, and no longer have occasion to teach our tiresome little ones; but what do you think now of our taking little Jessie out of the nursery, and handing her over to you? She is rather too young a pupil for you, I know, but we should think it very kind of you to undertake her instruction.' I was so delighted, mamma, you cannot think. She is such a sweet little darling, so like what poor Ellie was. It will be quite a pleasure to teach her. Of course I told Mrs. Newham I should be very glad, and so the matter is settled. Oh! we ought to be very grateful, that God has raised us up such true, kind friends; I am sure they will always do all they can to help us."

"Yes, indeed; I have a great regard for them, and I am very glad to hear you are to

continue your teaching there. But I am afraid we can't talk any longer now, dear; it is nearly nine o'clock."

"Oh! then I must be going," said Mary, rising from her low seat at her mother's knee. "I feel better for our chat, mamma, nothing like a free talking over of all our troubles, is there?"

"Well it does certainly seem to make them a little less hard to bear, when I have you to talk to, Mary. Good bye, my darling."

"Good bye, mamma; mind you read and amuse yourself whilst I am gone."

And after imprinting an affectionate kiss on her mother's pale cheek, Mary quitted the room.

The sad events of the last few months had altered Mrs. Graham greatly. She no longer fretted and complained as she had once done over the merest trifles. She was absorbed in the one great grief, the overwhelming sorrow of Archie's loss and disgrace. From the day when she had heard the final news of his de-

parture for India, she had changed. The interest she had once felt in all the little every-day matters, the continual murmuring and complaining if the least thing went wrong, had subsided. Her youngest, her darling, was not there, she could no longer spend the long, weary hours in picturing and looking forward to his return; the greatest happiness of her life was taken from her. Mrs. Graham loved all her children fondly, but the dearest to her heart, though she hardly owned it to herself, was the one who now caused her such bitter sorrow. Therefore the blow had fallen with terrible force on the poor mother's heart, altering the prospect of all things to her; even over their poverty she ceased to mourn and lament as heretofore; all these miseries sank into insignificance before this great affliction which had befallen her. Could she but see him once again! That was the chief thought and prayer of her heart.

Oh! that children should repay the fond love, which has watched so tenderly over

their childhood and infancy by thus bringing such bitter sorrow to their mother's heart in after years. That patient untiring devotion should surely be rewarded in a very different way from this! Would that the heedless youth, the erring daughter, would pause and consider ere they wounded the tender heart, which in its self-sacrificing love would so willingly yield up its all of earthly happiness, so that it ensured theirs. A mother's love—alas! that it should be so often slighted and forgotten; forgotten, till in trouble or disgrace, the before neglectful, heedless child turns to the fond arms ever open to receive him, however guilty and lost; to the ever sympathising bosom, to her who is so ready to pardon all, though the world look ever so coldly upon him. Purest, noblest of earthly loves! What praise is there too high, too warm for the untold wealth of a mother's love!

CHAPTER V.

Oh! more and more earnest that mother's prayer,
As her sighs are breathed on the midnight air,
Her own sad fate she has all forgot,
The unkindness that wounds her daily lot,
The neglect that leaves her to weep unknown,
Her heart is full of her child alone.

AGNES MARTIN sat by the open window of her own little boudoir one beautiful evening towards the end of August, and this time she was not alone.

A bright, beautiful boy, about three years old was playing at the further end of the room, and ever and anon as his sweet childish laugh broke the stillness of the apartment, the young mother turned to watch her

darling's movements with eyes in whose glistening depths shone forth the pride and deep tenderness of her heart for this her beloved, her cherished one. The four years which had intervened since last the reader saw Agnes Martin had not left her unchanged. There is a touching sadness in her (formerly so joyous) young face; a deeper, graver, shadow of melancholy than when we last saw her (though then weeping) in almost child-like petulance and anger over her first quarrel with her husband. It had not been the last. Many and serious had been the altercations of the wedded pair. The birth of their child, about a year after their marriage, drew their hearts closer together for a time, but soon, too soon, did the old spirit revive. The husband relapsed into his former habits of selfish indifference to the comfort and wishes of his wife, and she in utter disgust at his cold worldliness and unfeeling conduct towards her, gave her whole affections to her baby boy, all the love and devotion which had once been

his, who now so lightly and carelessly cast it from him.

It was about this time that she was summoned to watch beside the sick bed of her father, who was taken suddenly and dangerously ill; and the physician's opinion being that it would end fatally, and that he could not last many days, Agnes was immediately sent for, that they might be together during the short time now left to them for earthly intercourse.

Mr. Leslie had never been utterly regardless of religion, still (up to the present time,) he had contented himself with a mere formal adherence to all that he considered right and proper, without much of the real, heartfelt piety, which brings such true peace and happiness to the Christian's soul.

But now that he laid on the bed of death, he felt that not so ought he, not so could he, die. He sent for his young daughter, with a vague hope that she whom he had always thought so sweet and good, would surely be

able to enlighten the utter and overwhelming darkness of his soul. But Agnes could only weep and answer:

"You not happy, papa, you who have always done so much good, not fit to die! Oh! if you are not who is, what hope can any one have!"

"But Agnes," said Mr. Leslie earnestly, laying his hand on his heart as he spoke, "it is here, here that I feel there *is* a want, a something which I have not. I have done all the good I could, have attended church regularly, had daily prayers in my household, and yet, and yet—" he groaned as he added —"I have not *the* thing, Agnes, the confidence and hope that people say a Christian ought to have on his death bed. I do not feel (though I have done all this) that I am fit to die."

Alas! no. What is all our righteousness but filthy rags; how poor and insufficient do our good works appear to us when we come to die; what a deep, utter darkness over-

whelms our soul, if it is to them alone we have trusted to be saved!

Poor Agnes, she could only repeat:

"I am sure, papa, if you are not fit to die there is no one I know that is."

Fit to die!—As if the very best of us could ever be considered as fit or ready to enter into that presence, where even the angels stand with veiled faces before His most awful and glorious majesty.

Mr. Leslie turned uneasily on his pillow.

"Fetch the Bible, Agnes, and read some nice chapters to me—or stay, darling, would you write a note to Mr. Davidson. Tell him how ill I am, and ask him to come as soon as he can to read to me. I must have rest, rest and peace for my troubled mind."

A note was accordingly despatched to the worthy rector of the parish, and he came immediately.

The sick man listened eagerly as he proceeded to explain, in answer to his questions, the sweet blessed truths of the gospel. For

father and daughter these words had now a new, strange meaning, far beyond what they had ever had before. As little children in all humility of spirit, they listened and believed. They saw that they were to look to Christ alone for pardon and salvation; to cast aside all thoughts of gaining heaven by their own works and merits.

"We ought to labour steadfastly to do right, and not to disgrace our high christian calling by unworthy deeds; yet to count all that we do as naught, and trust alone to the atoning blood of Christ."

Such were the worthy clergyman's words in answer to Mr. Leslie's question—"Are we then to leave all to our Saviour, to go on in our own sinful way, trusting through him to be pardoned and forgiven at last?"

"No;" he continued solemnly, "terrible is the mistaken notion of requiring Faith, and Faith only to be saved—'Faith without works is dead.' Are we to sin wilfully, heedlessly, that grace may abound? Surely not.

Yet never—never ought we to trust to our own unworthy efforts alone for salvation."

Mr. Leslie pressed his hand warmly as he said at parting—

"Thanks, thanks, you know not the comfort which your words have brought. Oh! the blind ignorance in which I have hitherto lived! But humbly now do I pray I may be forgiven for my wicked presumption and pride."

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," answered Mr. Davidson solemnly, and after promising to renew his visit on the following day, he departed.

Very precious and sweet were the hours the father and daughter now passed together. Agnes, whose heart had been so wounded by her husband's neglect and unkindness, turned with eagerness to a hope and trust, which promised such an entire fulfilment of the most ardent longings of her young heart. Oh! how much more satisfying than aught that earth could afford, was the faith which now filled

her heart. How would she labour to instill those blessed precepts into her boy's mind, that when trouble or disappointment overtook him in after years, he too might be able to look up to Heaven for consolation and peace.

When on the fourth day after her arrival Mr. Leslie breathed his last, though her tears fell thick and fast, as she gazed on his lifeless form; though she felt deeply the separation from him, who had been ever so indulgent and loving a parent; she sorrowed not as she would once have done, passionately, despairingly, for she knew that he was but gone a short time before her, to the happy home where she now humbly hoped one day to rejoin him, never more to be parted.

Time passed on, and the little Hugh became more and more dear to his mother's heart. He was now indeed the one comfort and hope of her life, for her only remaining relative, the aunt, who had resided with them for some years previous to her marriage, had gone abroad

a short time before her brother-in-law's death, to rejoin her own and only brother, then living in Australia. Therefore, had it not been for her child, poor Agnes would have indeed been desolate.

Wider and wider had the estrangement grown between herself and husband, who noticing the change which had come over her, and the patience with which she now bore all his unkindness and neglect, scornfully called her a saint, and canting little hypocrite; adding that he hated such absurd acting and nonsense; he wasn't such a fool as to believe that she was grown so wondrous good. And so Agnes had to listen to many a sneer, many a cutting sarcasm, when she insisted on spending the Sabbath in a way which her conscience dictated.

Oh! how often with an aching heart did she reflect on the fatal mistake she had made in marrying such a man. How different it would have been if they had together striven

after good, each assisting the other in the upward road with sweet counsel and encouraging words; bearing each other's burdens, and putting up with each other's faults and weaknesses, knowing how much there was in themselves that was wrong and faulty. And then her thoughts would revert to her child, and she thanked God that such a blessing had been granted to cheer her on her thorny path. She still had him to love and cherish, to watch over with a mother's care and tenderness, to bring up in the right way, and teach to love the God she worshipped and served. The Faith which had become so dear to her heart, he too should be taught to hold precious and dear, far above all earthly things.

Thus she sat musing on the evening when we again introduce her to the reader, as usual, the one chief subject of her thoughts, the unconscious laughing boy, who absorbed in his toys and games, little dreamt the anxious solicitude of his mother's heart for his future years.

He ceased playing at length, however, with a sigh and look of weariness.

"I come to you now, mamma," he said, in his sweet lisping childish accents; "Hugh so tired, tell him pretty story."

Agnes clasped him fondly in her arms, the little curly head nestling in her bosom.

"What shall it be about, my darling?" she asked.

"Yack, the Yiant-killer, please, dear mamma."

And so the wonderful exploits of the marvelous Jack were related for about the seventh time to the awe-struck little listener, who, with his large blue eyes fixed intently on his mother's face, seemed as if he would never grow tired of hearing them. Gradually, however, the lids drooped over the bright orbs, the little weary head sank still lower, and he lay motionless in his mother's arms, sleeping peacefully.

Agnes gazed admiringly at the little cherub face so beautiful in repose, the long silken

lashes resting on the rosy cheek, the dimpled mouth, half open, revealing the row of pearly teeth.

"My beautiful, my precious darling!" she murmured, as she gazed at her child with all a young mother's deep affection and pride; "couldst thou but remain ever thus, innocent and happy!" And clasping him still closer to her bosom, she prayed fervently that he might be guarded and preserved amidst the manifold temptations of the world,—might indeed choose the better path, the one and only sure road to happiness.

Young mothers, who, like Agnes, look forward into the future, picturing the sorrows and griefs which will fall upon the loved darlings of your heart, sighing to think that not with all your love and care, will you be able to shield them from disappointment and trials in the wilderness of this life; do you, like her, look upward, and confide your treasures to Him who alone can watch over and guard them; do you, like her, pray for assistance to guide their

trembling footsteps aright in the dangerous paths of the world;—do you too, as they grow older, impress upon their young minds the wisdom and love of their Heavenly Father, and joining their little hands, teach them to pray to Him who alone can keep them secure from harm, who has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me." If so you can indeed do no more for them, and in after years you will be repaid by seeing your children walking honestly and uprightly in the fear of the Lord, bearing all trouble and losses with meekness and patience, because they know that there is a happier home, a better place, prepared for them in Heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

How sweet the autumn Sabbath's evening walk,
When nights are beautiful, to pour the soul,
Filled with all nature's joy, in reverent talk,
Into affection's ears; to see the whole
And perfect harmony; to ne'er controul
The indistinct aspirings after bliss,
The rapt imagination will unroll;
But longing for a world where troubles cease,
To linger o'er the joys still left to sweeten this.

"Amy, don't take off your things, dear; Mr. Graham is just come in with Charles, and we are all going for a stroll. Really, I am so glad, it seemed a short walk from church, and it's such a beautiful moonlight night. Won't it be nice, we four? Come along, darling!" and Julia threw her arm playfully round her friend's waist, hurrying her downstairs into the hall, where the the two young men awaited them.

"Oh! here you are. Well, come along, Julia," said Charles Mildmay gaily, drawing Julia's arm through his; "Graham we will just separate these young ladies, if you please; they are together all day, and I should think ought to give us each their exclusive attention and society in the evening."

"Why, Charles, you know I do always when you are here," said Julia simply, looking up enquiringly into her lover's face as they walked on together, "I would never slight or neglect you, not even for Amy."

"Oh! no, no, darling; you did not understand. It was just a little ruse of mine to make others as happy as ourselves." He glanced back as he spoke, and added, "Ah! they are all right I see, he has offered her his arm; let us make haste on, and leave them to themselves."

"Oh! I see now; you mean Ernest and Amy," said Julia quickly. "Do you really think they are getting fond of each other, Charles? I should be so glad if they were."

"Why, as regards Amy, I am not so good a judge as you, Julia; that's just the thing I want to know, for Graham I am sure, poor fellow, is very much taken with her. He has been so dull lately, and though I know his depression is partly owing to that affair about his brother, still I am sure Amy has something to do with it too. Since I have been in love myself, Julia, I have been quicker at noticing its symptoms in others, and whenever I mention Amy's name even, he looks so queer, and tries to change the conversation, which looks very odd, doesn't it?"

"It does indeed," answered Julia meditatively. "Oh! how I wish I knew whether Amy cared for him. He has had so much trouble, it would be shocking for him to be unfortunate in love too. There is that Vaughan fellow, that I can't bear, has been paying Amy such attention lately. I should be so grieved if she threw herself away upon such a coxcomb as that."

"Well, she may not be thinking of doing

any such thing. But I certainly do wonder, Julia, that you have not got a little at the real state of her heart, such friends as you are."

"But do you know, Charles, that has nothing whatever to do with it about Amy and me. She is so different to other girls. She would not for anything tell me she loved Ernest Graham, or indeed anyone, without it was all settled, and she knew she was loved in return. Oh! no, Amy is just the sort to be reserved about such matters, even with her best friends."

"Humph! Well then we can't get at it yet, can we, Julia? But we will throw them together as much as possible, and I should think she must get fond of him, such a fine handsome fellow as he is, and so good too!"

"Yes, indeed, they are so well suited in every way. Oh! I do so hope it may be!" said Julia warmly, with girlish enthusiasm.

"Yes, then we should be having two weddings," said Charles archly, "of two friends,

or rather four. Oh! Julia," he continued in a graver tone, "how happy and thankful I am that I have at length a home to offer you, my darling."

And the lovers commenced an animated discussion of their own plans and prospects, which were now very bright ones; Charles having at length obtained a sufficient income to enable him to marry, the wedding was to take place in about three months. They were to be rewarded at last for their patience and constancy by being united, with as bright a prospect of happiness as any young couple could desire.

It was to be no final separation for Julia from her parents and friends, for it was arranged that they should live in the near neighbourhood of the Priory, therefore the pain of parting would be greatly lessened. Yes, they were indeed happy—happy in the confidence of mutual affection, grounded on esteem; in the knowledge that whatever trials might befall them in after life, they would be together,

to comfort and assist each other. Delightful thought for those who love as they did, truly, unselfishly, to know that they would be ever near the beloved one in sickness or in sorrow, to soothe with words of sympathy and love.

But it is time we return (not to Julia and Charles), but to those lingering behind, Amy and Ernest. They had walked on in silence after Charles's so prompt arrangement of the order in which they were to walk. Amy was the first to speak.

"I am so glad to have an opportunity of talking to you, Mr. Graham, about what you said in your sermon this evening. You said it was so wrong to fix our hearts and hopes on earth, to love things here too much. Now I know, of course, that we ought to set heavenly far above earthly things, but still it seems so very natural to love our friends here very much indeed, if they are good and amiable, and then—" (she looked admiringly around her as she spoke), "this earth is so

lovely, there is so much to attract and bind our hearts' affections here. Oh! I am afraid I am amongst those whom you warned so earnestly against a too great love for the world and the things of the world."

"You did not quite understand my meaning I think," said Ernest gently. "It is not wrong to admire and love the beautiful here on earth in a moderate degree; far from it. Else why did God create this world so fair, or implant those sweet natural affections in our hearts; the love which unites us in such happy fellowship, the dear ties of mother, wife, sister and brother. Oh! no, Miss de Vere, we do not err in loving these things (sent to cheer us on our pilgrimage), in a moderate degree only," and he sighed deeply as he spoke, "we are all too prone to make idols of this world, to give them our best, our whole heart's affections, leaving but a very poor return for Him who died to save us from eternal misery and despair. What I said this evening to others, was only through

a past train of thought relative to myself. Therefore, you see," he added, with rather a sad smile, "the preacher too finds it very hard to act up to the high standard, which he raises for others to attain to. With all our struggles we are but poor conquerors. We can only pray for more strength to help us to do as we would wish."

"Indeed, we do greatly need it," answered Amy gravely. "Oh! Mr. Graham, sometimes in church, as this evening when the service and hymns were so beautiful, I wish that I could always feel as I do then, so good and happy, as if I had no wish to do wrong. But then, when it is all over, and we return home, it seems such a dreary coming back to the world again. And too often, even in listening to the frivolous conversation going on around me, I forget all my good thoughts and resolutions."

"I understand you perfectly; indeed, the thoughtless levity and light remarks of some on coming from the house of God is very much

to be lamented. The foolish word or jest often falls on other ears than those for whom they are intended, those whose hearts are perhaps filled with serious thoughts of what they have just heard, and the solemn service in which they have been engaged. There they strike jarringly indeed, bringing back the world and all its vanities to their minds. But if these rare moments of heavenly peace and joy seem so beautiful, what must Heaven be, where we shall always feel thus, where there is no more sin and sorrow?"

Amy glanced up at the starry firmament above them.

"Yes, if this earth is so lovely," she murmured, "Heaven must indeed be a beautiful place. Poor James! he is safe. I am so glad he died peacefully, Mr. Graham."

"Yes, I have seldom seen so truly peaceful and happy a deathbed. He talked of you a short time before he died, told me how kind you had been to them, and bade me thank you once more for him."

"I do not deserve such gratitude and praise," said Amy hastily. "Money, that I could easily spare; what was it to me the little I gave? You, you, Mr. Graham, who give your time, who devote your life to doing good; it is you who really deserve such gratitude."

"And do not I deserve some notice, Miss de Vere?" said a voice suddenly behind them, "after running for at least a mile at my utmost speed to overtake you?"

And a young man, the Mr. Vaughan alluded to by Julia in her conversation with Charles, sprang lightly over the fence which divided him from them, and passing by Ernest with rather an abrupt hurried salutation, advanced towards the startled Amy, continuing with some *empressement* in his look and voice—

"But what would I not do, where would I not go with the prospect of seeing you, Miss de Vere? You are doubtless surprised to see me to-day, and at this hour; but I am the bearer of an invitation to yourself and Miss

Norton to a dinner party my mother has arranged for next Wednesday." He handed Amy a tiny scented note as he spoke. "It was such a lovely evening that I thought I might as well come myself at once, and receive your answer; but finding on my arrival at the Priory both fair birds flown, and Mrs. Norton kindly informing me she thought you would take this road, I hastened after you, and here I am at your service, humbly awaiting your orders."

Poor Amy! She turned an almost imploring glance towards Ernest, and feigned for a moment not to see the proffered arm; but his face was partly averted, and she saw no signs of his again offering the support, which in the first surprise of the meeting she had relinquished. She was wounded by this apparent indifference and coldness on his part. Could he then so easily yield her up to another, see another occupy his place by her side, and that other an acknowledged admirer and suitor for her hand.

She walked on silent and depressed, scarcely hearing the gay compliments and jests of her companion, only thinking with an aching pain at her heart, which she had never felt before, that Ernest had relinquished his place by her side readily, and (as it seemed to her) unnecessarily. A sudden halt on the part of Julia and Charles, who stopped to say that they thought it was time to retrace their steps towards home, occasioned a little diversion, and roused her from her reverie. In the confusion which ensued, the greeting of the newcomer, and questions to be asked and answered, Amy took the opportunity to steal a glance towards Ernest, who stood on the other side of the little group.

Her eyes were quickly dropped again on encountering the sad earnest gaze which was riveted on her face. Her heart thrilled once more with a feeling of inexpressible happiness. The loving look of those eyes. She could not be deceived—he did love her deeply, truly! She would doubt it no longer,

though he did appear cold and strange sometimes. It would all be right at last, and Amy roused herself from her abstraction, and was once more merry and happy, chatting pleasantly with all, and appealing now and then to Ernest for his opinion on different matters in the hopes of rousing him from his gloominess and dejection. Perhaps he was thinking of the brother whom she had heard he loved so much, and who had caused them all such unhappiness. He was so often sad now, even with her; it must be that.

And so she exerted herself to the utmost to amuse and enliven him, talked in her merriest gayest strain, in hopes of winning a smile in return; whilst he, with a bitter, jealous pang, thought how happy she was in the society of another, felt that the time he had so dreaded was come, and that he would have to stand by and see her attention monopolized, her hand claimed by one whose wealth and position were equal to her own, who might dare to

think of winning her love without fear of scorn and contempt.

Poor Ernest! Refusing the warm invitation of Julia to re-enter the Priory with the rest, he made a hasty adieu, and with a heavy heart took his way towards his desolate home. The brief happiness of the walk with Amy, those few delightful moments of uninterrupted intercourse, had indeed only served to render him now doubly wretched. How sweet it had been to listen to the high thoughts, the holy aspirations of the young heart, which had opened itself so freely and unreservedly to him; how happy he had been, forgetting for a time that there was aught that could separate them, so one in thought and feeling. But then *he* had come, he who now so often took her from him; and she—(oh! the anguish of that thought!)—she had smiled on him, seemed to take pleasure in his society. "Oh, Lord! let it not be so!" was the agonized cry which rose to his lips. "Spare me, I cannot give

her up—I can bear all save this. Only give me the blessing of her love!"

Ah, Ernest! Ernest! have you forgotten your own warning words of to-night?—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols!"

CHAPTER VII.

Unheeded and alone he stood,
In his sorrow and despair;
No gentle hand to smooth his brow,
No loving voice was there.

ARCHIE'S promise to write to his mother to inform her of the day of his departure was no subterfuge to avoid farther communication with them. He really thought at the time that he should be able to fulfil his promise, and had no idea how suddenly and unexpectedly the order would arrive for him to rejoin his regiment.

It was a severe blow when he found he should be obliged to depart without seeing

his family once more, and the expressions of sorrow and regret, in the letter he immediately wrote to them, were sincere and unfeigned. In spite of all his efforts, he could not forget Ernest's arguments and entreaties; something whispered that he had erred in thus wounding the hearts of those who loved him so fondly, and acting in such determined opposition to their wishes. Often too, a sickening feeling of apprehension would steal over him, as a real sense of his humiliating position forced itself upon him.

Should he indeed, as Ernest had said, be long doomed to such companionship and degradation, how would he ever be able to bear it? But though these thoughts would intrude painfully on his mind, he had not yet come to a real sense of his folly, never once thought that there was yet time to retrieve the rash step he had taken. No, when at last that hour came, when he longed with an aching heart for freedom and deliverance from his miserable bondage, it was too late. Alas!

that often it should be too late to retract; one false step taken, how hard it is to retrace!

In the hurry and bustle of the preparations for departure Archie had scarcely time to realize the reality of his position. But when on the last evening he departed for a solitary walk, when at length alone, he thought of the morrow, when he should indeed quit his native land, the home of his childhood perhaps for ever, the rush of painful agonizing associations caused him to feel for the first time the real pain of separation from home, country and friends.

His thoughts reverted to the quiet churchyard, to the one little mound he had so often wept over. When would he see that grave again, what might not happen before he stood once more on that last peaceful resting place of the departed? And the home where he had once been so happy, where, in spite of poverty and trouble, he had passed so many happy hours where they now mourned over him as lost; had he indeed forsaken all—all!

Hot blinding tears fell on the little bible he had taken from his pocket, a present from his loving sister in happier days, when no bereavement or sorrow had overtaken them. "For my dear brother Archie, from his ever affectionate sister Mary."

He gazed at the words with an aching longing to see the dear face once again, to press the hand which had traced those lines. Still such a child in heart and feeling, to be cast on the wide world alone; but seventeen, so young, so inexperienced, a mere boy in years, and he was about to enter upon a life fraught with temptation and danger. Well might his heart fail him at last, well might he pray for succour and aid.

And when the final moment for departure came, and when he stood apart, alone and desolate, watching the fast receding shores which each moment grew more and more indistinct to his eager gaze; when he felt that many a long year must pass away ere he again looked on his English home, the scene of all his joys

and tears; did he not turn to look with a feeling almost of horror and despair at those by whom he was surrounded, who were henceforth to be his companions, and contrast them with those whom he had deserted—his loving mother, the sweet gentle sister whose voice had so often cheered, the brother whose counsels had so often kept him from wrong. All, all had he cast away wilfully, recklessly—and for what? Unhappy boy! He had yet to learn the real misery of his position; had yet to drink to the dregs the bitter cup he had himself raised to his lips.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sleep, sleep, to-day, tormenting cares,
Of earth and folly born!
Solemnly sang the village choir
On that sweet Sabbath morn.

LONGFELLOW.

IT was the Sabbath—sweet day of holy rest and peace for all—Mary stood at their little garden gate, prayer-book in hand, awaiting Mrs. Graham, who generally accompanied her to the morning, though her health prevented her attending, the evening service.

They had received a letter from Archie on the previous day, informing them of his safe arrival in India; but though filled with ex-

pressions of affection and enquiries as to *their* welfare, he wrote in a reserved, constrained manner concerning himself, chiefly dwelling on the country and its inhabitants, with a description of which his letter was almost filled. Eagerly did Mary's eye pass over the (to her) uninteresting details, longing, as she did for one word concerning himself and his thoughts and feelings; but she looked in vain, and thus the so anxiously expected letter proved, after all, but a bitter disappointment. Too well she knew the reason of his silence and reserve in regard to himself. He was beginning to feel, as they had told him he would, the consequences of what he had done, and rashly, wrongly as he had acted, still her heart ached for him, alone and desolate in a far-off land. All his faults forgotten, she thought only of the loved brother who in sorrow and disgrace seemed dearer than ever to her heart. Through the long hours of the night she lay wakeful and miserable, picturing him in his loneliness and despair, with no

one by to cheer and comfort him, and weeping bitter tears over his treasured letter.

She awoke next morning with a dreary feeling of misery and despondency gnawing at her heart. Her path through life seemed indeed marked out to be a hard, difficult way of sorrow and of tears. Would it be always thus, she thought, would her dearest, brightest hopes ever be thus blighted and destroyed? And then, as if in answer to the doubting thought which had arisen, the sweet, comforting words came to her mind—"He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved."—"In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And raising her tearful eyes trustingly towards Heaven, she prayed for more faith and resignation to be enabled to bear her trials with meekness and patience. Confidence in His all-powerful arm who could save and protect those so dear to her; who could alter the prospect of all things, and make everything work together for good, that

confidence and trust returned, bringing a sweet feeling of peace and resignation to her wounded heart.

As she stood listening to the musical chimes of the Sabbath bells, though her thoughts reverted to the brother who had once stood by her side, but who now, a far-off wanderer from his native land, heard no sweet Sabbath bells, she felt that he was watched over by One who would never fail or desert her so long as she put her whole trust and confidence in His mercy. It might please Him yet to restore to them their beloved one, as Ernest had prayed on that memorable evening after his return from his unsuccessful interview, better, wiser, for the sad experience he had gained.

Yes—she would still hope on, and pray that it might be so, and not sinfully give way to despairing, doub'ing thoughts. And thus as she entered the House of God, and took her accustomed seat, her face had resumed its usual calm, sweet look of pensive thought. The

tempest of sorrow and despair was past; leaving her more trusting, more patient than before.

Mrs. Newham had kindly offered them seats in their own large family pew, to the great astonishment and annoyance of Miss Isabel Gerald and her friends, who "really wondered what ridiculous thing she would do next about that Mary Graham!" Miss Isabel farther added, "she hated to see her face always struck just opposite to them, she, a poor governess, seeming to think herself as good as anybody there."

Perhaps the young lady's bitter indignation and annoyance arose from the knowledge that there were others who liked to have the sweet, gentle face always opposite to them, and that many a furtive, admiring glance was cast towards the corner occupied by Mary Graham.

The unconscious object of all this jealousy and remark was happily too much occupied in the solemn service in which she was engaged to give even a passing thought to Miss

Isabel and her companions. On this morning particularly, she sat absorbed in her own sorrowful musings, turning over the leaves of her Bible, and scarcely noticing what was going on around her, till the opening of the pew door, in which they sat caused her to raise her eyes, expecting as usual to see the well known faces of her friends. Yes, they were there, but what was it caused the startled look, the deep crimson which suddenly suffused Mary's cheek and brow? A stranger accompanied them, and the face, the eyes that met her startled gaze she knew full well were the same she had once looked upon with such admiration and interest.

The original of the portrait, the Arthur of whom she had heard so much, stood before her.

She dropped her eyes in confusion, feeling painfully conscious of the deep blush which had overspread her face. Why, she asked herself, was she thus agitated and confused at meeting with an utter stranger? It must be

because she had heard so much about him; been so interested in the sad story of his earlier life. Yes, but he did not know that—what would he think? Poor Mary, overwhelmed by the surprise of the moment, averted her blushing face as much as possible, trying in vain to be calm and unconscious under the earnest gaze of the dark eyes, which he felt, rather than saw, were fixed upon her face.

After a momentary hesitation, he took the vacant seat by her side, the other being occupied by Mrs. Graham, and, as he bent his head for some moments in prayer, Mary had time to collect her scattered thoughts, and to regain, in some degree, her composure, returning Mrs. Newham's kind smile of recognition. She ventured not another look at the tall figure by her side, fearful of again meeting the glance which had caused her confusion, but tried hard to regain her former tranquillity, and to devote her whole attention to the beautiful, solemn words of the hymn

usually sung at the commencement of the service.

But her thoughts would wander to him who had thus suddenly and unexpectedly appeared before her. He, too, like her, mourned over the absence of a fondly loved brother; he, too, had known deep sorrow and trial. There was a bond of sympathy between them that he knew not of. Mary thought he knew it not, but he had heard all, heard, too, of her goodness and worth, and now gazed with deep interest at the fair young face beside him.

Arthur Mainwaring had arrived at Mr. Newham's but the evening before. Having been suddenly called upon to return to London on business of importance, he had taken the opportunity to pay a visit to his friends, and at their urgent request, had arranged to prolong his stay, so as to be able to remain with them for some days. Mrs. Newham had laughingly told him he must stay if it were only to see a dear young friend of hers, whom she was most anxious to introduce to him, "and

Arthur," she added with an arch smile, "I don't think you will be quite so anxious to leave us, when you have seen Mary Graham."

He had answered in the same gay strain that he should be most happy to be introduced to her charming friend, and then as she proceeded to relate the struggles and trials of Mary's life; the affliction which had so lately befallen them in regard to Archie, and her patience and meekness through all, he listened with the grave interest of one who could understand the deep anguish of the sister's heart, for even more bitter had been his trial in the loss of his mother, and the brother whom his heart so yearned to see again; but whom he now mourned over as lost to him for ever in this world, over whose fate there hung so dark a cloud of mystery and sorrow. Yes, he could well enter into their feelings who now grieved over the destruction of their bright hopes for the future of the wilful boy who had so grieved them.

"Gone to India?" he said musingly, as Mrs. Newham finished the recital of her young friend's trouble. "Could he not be prevailed on to return?"

"No, I am afraid not, for his brother went to him a short time before he left, and used every argument he could think of to induce him to go back, and it was all useless. Besides which—how would they be able to pay the money for his discharge, and voyage home as well? They have enough to do to get along as it is. That poor girl slaving as she does to keep their little house together, and the elder brother is a curate with only fifty pounds a year in all. It would be impossible."

"Ah! I see," said Arthur Mainwaring, thoughtfully "Poor thing! What a very sad affair. Well, I am quite anxious to see this Miss Graham now, after all I have heard about her."

"I thought you would be interested," said Mrs. Newham smilingly. "You will see her

to-morrow, at church, and shall be introduced in due form."

And thus the earnest gaze which had so surprised and confused Mary, had not been the mere curious look of a stranger, but of one, who already felt a warm interest and sympathy for the poor, young governess, who had known so much sorrow and suffering. And as he noticed the quiet loveliness of the fair face turned towards him, the soft, blue eyes in whose dreamy depths there seemed to dwell such a spirit of love and gentleness; he thought in his heart that Mrs. Newham had not over-estimated the beauty and attractions of Mary Graham.

The service over, Mrs. Newham whispered hastily to Mary not to go away in too great a hurry; they would walk part of the way home with them; she had not had a chat with Mrs. Graham for so long a time, &c. So the whole party descended the stairs together, and arrived in the church-

yard, Mrs. Newham turned towards Arthur to perform the ceremony of introduction.

"Mr. Mainwaring, Mrs. Graham. Mary dear, this is my friend Arthur, whom I have so often talked about. This is Miss Mary Graham, Arthur."

CHAPTER IX.

How sweet—how passing sweet the dreams we dreamed,
If dreams they be
Which have so strong a power o'er heart and brain,
To make life lovely, or a path of pain."
Dreams are unreal—therefore call these not
Dreams which thus beautify, or cloud our lot!

Alicia Jane Sparrow.

It was the Wednesday following the Sunday on which Mary first met Arthur Mainwaring. Mrs. Newham had arranged to give a party on that evening, in honour of his arrival, to which Mary had received an invitation, and she now stood before the old-fashioned mirror in her

little bed-room, anxiously contemplating the effect of her simple evening toilette.

"How do you think I look, mamma?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Graham, who stood beside her."

"You could not look better, darling. That camelia in your hair has an extremely pretty effect."

"Do you think so? It seemed to me not to look so very well;" and again Mary turned towards the mirror, gazing at the fair face it reflected, with a doubtful, dissatisfied expression.

"Why? my dear. You are unusually anxious about your appearance to-night. You generally have not seemed to care so much how you looked," said the simple-hearted Mrs. Graham, with a puzzled look; seeing that Mary had, for the fourth time, re-arranged the soft folds of her muslin dress, and again displaced the flower from amongst her clustering curls.

The bright flush of excitement deepened on Mary's cheek at her mother's words.

"Yes, it is stupid, mamma, to be so fastidious about my dress," she said, twisting the stalk of the flower nervously in her hand. "I'll just go, as I am, and won't wear the camelia at all."

"Now, my dear, that is foolish," said poor Mrs. Graham, utterly at a loss to understand the strange and unusual caprice of her daughter's conduct. "You must wear something in your hair. With that simple, white dress, you absolutely require it."

"Oh, mamma, I do so wish I was not going at all! I know something will happen to mortify and make me miserable before the evening is out—it always does. What is the use of my looking forward to it so, only to be disappointed?"

"You may not be disappointed, Mary."

"Oh! yes, I shall—and, and—I don't look nice, I did want to look nice this evening;"

and covering her face with her hands, she fairly burst into tears, repeating: "I do so wish I could stay at home."

"Why, Mary, I never saw you so excited and strange before. To cry just as you are going out! Pray dry your eyes, and let me put the flower in your hair. There, it is all right again now, and here is Martha come to tell you for the second time that the cab is waiting."

"Oh! Miss Mary," said the old servant, lifting up her hands in admiration at the sight of her young mistress. "You do look beautiful! Why, you are really fit to be a queen, that you are!"

"In your eyes, Martha, perhaps," said Mary smiling. "Well I must go I suppose. Good bye, mamma dear; I have been very silly, I know, but I feel so excited to-night; I could not help it."

As Mrs. Graham kissed the flushed cheek extended to her, she could not help won-

dering afresh as to the reason for such excitement and agitation, but made no farther remark, only repeating her wish that she might enjoy herself. And so Mary departed; the simple, unfeigned admiration of old Martha having somewhat reassured and soothed her in regard to her appearance.

On her arrival Mrs. Newham, as usual, accompanied her upstairs to remove her cloak, preparatory to entering the drawing-room.

"Well, Mary, what do you think of Arthur Mainwaring?" she asked gaily. "Does he answer the expectations you had formed of him from his portrait?"

"I—I think he is very handsome," stammered Mary, apparently deeply absorbed in the very difficult task of unfastening her cloak.

"Well, my dear, he is as good as he is handsome, and that is saying a great deal isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Mary, the cloak seeming still greatly to absorb her attention,

and an insuperable obstacle to farther conversation or remark respecting Arthur Mainwaring. So after a few indifferent remarks on other subjects, they descended the stairs, Mary's heart beating quicker and quicker as they approached the drawing-room, and Mrs. Newham, noticing the trembling of the hand she held in hers, stopped, kindly asking her whether she would prefer entering by one of the side rooms.

"Oh! yes," said Mary gratefully. "I am so foolishly nervous to-night. You know I am sometimes."

"You will be all right presently," said her friend re-assuringly, "there is no one in here that you need care about," and opening the door of the adjoining apartment Mrs. Newham gently drew her forward, and Mary found herself in the quiet little back drawing-room, where, engaged in earnest conversation with rather an elderly gentleman, with whom she had become slightly acquainted in her

frequent visits at the Newhams, sat Arthur Mainwaring.

Both gentlemen rose on their entrance, and Arthur came forward with evident pleasure in his look and voice.

"Come at last, Miss Graham. I was really beginning to be afraid you were not going to give us the pleasure of your company this evening," handing her a chair as he spoke.

"Well, now she is here, I shall leave you to entertain her, Arthur, for a short time. You will excuse me, my dear, a minute or two whilst I go and see how they are getting on in the next room." And Mrs. Newham hurried away, very well pleased to leave her two favorites together, to get better acquainted.

"I am afraid I have disturbed you," said Mary, addressing herself to the old gentleman by her side. "Pray do not let me prevent your continuing the conversation we interrupted!"

"It would not prove a very interesting sub-

ject to you, Miss Graham," said Arthur, laughing, "being a dry political discussion, in which ladies do not generally take much interest. Besides which, we have now settled the question in hand to the satisfaction of both parties, as Mr. Davis will tell you."

"Yes, yes," said the old gentleman good-humouredly. "You did not disturb us in the least, my dear, always glad to see the ladies, you know. But that reminds me that my little niece over there in the next room will be wondering what is become of me all this time. I must go and see what she is about," and vacating the place by her side, the old gentleman trotted off into the adjoining room, leaving Mary and Arthur comparatively alone, the folding doors leading into the front drawing-room being partially closed.

There was a moment's embarrassed pause, Mary turning over the leaves of an album by her side and keeping her eyes determinately fixed on its pages; Arthur gazing admiringly

at the fair face before him; yet seeming equally at a loss for a subject for conversation.

"You seem to have found something very attractive in that album, Miss Graham," he said at length, drawing his chair to her side. "May I share the interest of it?"

"Oh! certainly," she answered smilingly, holding the book towards him. "I was admiring this drawing. It is remarkably well done."

"I am very glad you think so. It is a rough sketch of my own of, of," a shade of melancholy passed over his face, "the house where I passed the greater part of my earlier life."

"You drew this! Oh! how beautifully it is done! I quite envy people that can draw or paint!" said Mary with a sigh.

"Do you not draw then?" asked Arthur, quickly.

"I had just begun to take lessons about

four years ago, and then circumstances occurred, which prevented my continuing them. I have always regretted it so much!"

"Ah!" said he, thoughtfully, seeming to be revolving something in his mind. "If I were but going to stop on here for sometime, how happy I should be to teach you! It is not much that I know myself, but still ——"

"Well, I shall 'take the will for the deed,'" answered Mary, gaily, "and thank you for your kindness all the same."

"Oh! but I should like to merit your thanks," he answered, and bending his head still lower, he continued earnestly, "and hope to do so, Miss Graham. I shall see if I cannot arrange ——"

"To take her into the next room," said Mrs. Newham, laughing, who had approached them unobserved. "Why, Mary dear, still in here! I want you to sing—come along. Whatever you were going to arrange, Arthur, you must content yourself for the present with

turning over the leaves of her music for her."

"I shall be most happy," said he, turning towards Mary, and offering her his arm.

Poor Mary! Here was a most terrible ordeal to be gone through; to enter the crowded drawing-room, to sing with him so near, by her side, how should she ever do it!

Arthur noticed the varying colour, and the half-frightened look, with which she clung to his arm.

"You are nervous, and do not like singing before so many people," he whispered. "Choose a duet; I will sing it with you. You will not mind so much, then, will you?" he asked, gently pressing the hand which rested on his arm.

"Oh! no—thank you so much!" with a grateful look of the soft eyes raised for a moment to his.

There was a lull in the conversation going on in the next room on their entrance, several

ladies advancing cordially to greet Mary with kind inquiries and a warm shake of the hand; others (and these principally the younger ones) saluting her with a frigid, patronising condescension, as if they wished to impress most forcibly on her mind a sense of the favor and honor they were conferring by noticing her at all.

"Miss Graham going to sing?" said one of the Miss Foresters to her companion, in an affected whisper, meant for Arthur's ears. "Well, really, what a thing it is to be sure to have such confidence! Now, I am so terribly nervous and sensitive. It would be quite impossible for *me* to sing before any one, but then people are so different!" and the young lady gazed after Mary's retreating figure with a sarcastic smile.

There was a universal "hush! hush!" as the deep, manly tones of Arthur's voice resounded through the apartment, and Mary listened absorbed, spell-bound, forgetful of the

part she herself was called upon to perform, till he whispered, smilingly:

"Am I to sing quite alone, Miss Graham?"

Then recollecting herself, she began, falteringly and tremblingly at first, but gaining more courage as she went on, till the sweet, clear notes swelled louder and louder, the two voices blending most harmoniously together. Thanks and praises resounded on every side, as the last note died away, and they turned from the piano.

You have given me a very great pleasure," said Arthur, as he led Mary towards a seat. "I am extremely fond of singing, but seldom care to sing alone. I have nearly forgotten my old favorite songs, but perhaps you will kindly allow me to practise them over some day with you. Give me a few hints in exchange for my drawing lessons," he added, laughing.

Mary felt those few words to be an inexpressible relief. He was not going quite away

then yet, or, if he were, would soon return. She was happy, happier than she had been for many a long day; she did not dare to ask herself why, or to analize the feelings of her heart.

But when she at length found herself alone, when she recalled the events of that happy evening, the gentle pressure of the hand at parting, the last lingering look, those whispered words, "Till to-morrow, then," she buried her face in her hands, and thought long and deeply. Why, why did she thus treasure every word and glance; why look forward with such anxiety to the morrow when they should again meet. And then the crimson flush mantled over neck, cheek, and brow, and large tears fell through the slender fingers, as the consciousness forced itself upon her mind that she had given her heart away, once more loved, and even more deeply than before, for she knew he was indeed all that her fancy pictured as noble and good. But

would he love her? Ah! poor Mary! The tears fell faster and faster, as she murmured, "Impossible." Such happiness was not for her, and yet in her prayers that night, his name would rise to her lips, and she murmured:

"Lord, thou knowest the inmost thoughts and wishes of my heart, yet if it is good for me that they should not be granted, Thy will, not mine, be done."

Yes, Mary had learnt in the agony of Archie's loss, no longer blindly and passionately to fix her heart on things below. Whatever her petition, those words were now always added, knowing and trusting as she did to the love of Him who would overrule all things for her good.

o o o o

And Arthur—what were his thoughts concerning the gentle girl who thus prayed and

thought of him: as the last guest departed, he stood with folded arms gazing dreamily at the faded leaves of a flower at his feet, the camelia which had dropped from Mary's hair in the hurry of departure. He started as Mrs. Newham's voice fell on his ear.

"Well, Arthur, to-morrow will be your last day with us. How I wish you could stay longer."

"What I was just thinking of, Lucy," he said eagerly. "I intend writing several letters to-morrow on some business, which must be attended to, and then if you will be troubled with me a few days longer, I shall be only too happy to stay."

An arch smile played round the corners of Mrs. Newham's mouth as she answered—

"You know, dear Arthur, that it will give us equal pleasure to have your company longer than we had hoped for. But may I ask one little question? We are such old

friends, you will not mind telling me," and she laid her hand affectionately on his shoulder, "Has Mary Graham anything to do with this sudden determination of yours?"

"She has," in a low voice of suppressed emotion.

There was a moment's pause, and then Mrs. Newham took his hand in hers, pressing it warmly.

"Then I can only say you have my best, my warmest wishes for your success and happiness, Arthur; but I need not assure you of it, need I? You know that it is so."

"I do indeed know you to be a true friend; but Lucy," with rather a sad smile, "your congratulations are too premature, I have yet to win her love."

"And you will win it, dear Arthur, for you are worthy of her, good, noble girl as she is."

"You think so, Lucy. Well, I will try and deserve your good opinion. Many thanks for your kind encouraging words. Good night."

"Good night—pleasant dreams of Mary Graham. Why, here is her flower she has left behind her!" and with a smile she put it into his hand, adding, "you had better take care of it for her, Arthur."

CHAPTER X.

Dream not now—send back each wandering thought,
Back to the heart's most lonely hidden cell;
They only waken sad and bitter tears,
Bid the wild conflict cease—farewell! farewell!

THE bells rang merrily, gay, happy young faces smiled around her as she turned from the altar, now the wife of him who stood by her side. Fair Julia Norton was united for ever to the one she had so long loved. Those solemn words were uttered—"Till death us do part!" the blessing given, and she turned her tearful eyes trustingly and lovingly towards him for whom she had left the dear home of

her childhood, father, mother, friends; who was henceforth to be all in all to her.

Who can tell the many thronging thoughts, the deep emotion which thrilled through her young heart as she stood there in her bridal robes, and felt that now indeed she had entered upon a new life; new duties, new responsibilities would henceforth be hers, she was bound by vows which death alone could break. Ah! would not her heart have failed her at that solemn moment, had she not known that he for whom she had thus relinquished all, to whom she had entrusted her lifelong happiness, was indeed worthy of the trust; would guide and counsel her for good and not for evil; would faithfully fulfil his promise to cherish and protect her through all trouble and sorrow! Yes, that happy confidence sustained and cheered her. She would be well repaid for the sacrifice she was making, by his tender love and care, and though, when the final moment of departure came, and she bade

farewell to her loving parents, to Amy, the dear friend of her childhood and youth, the tears would rise, as she was pressed to the heart of each in a last fond embrace, she whispered consolingly—

"It will not be long before we meet again. I am happy, and you know, dear papa, that I shall be so with Charles."

And thus she departed, followed by many a blessing and prayer, many a heartfelt wish for her happiness and welfare—Amy, her bright eyes dimmed with tears at parting with her friend, stole off to her own room, there to indulge her sorrow freely, and to muse, as she now often did, alone and in tears, over the change in Ernest's manner towards her.

Poor Amy! she could not understand why he no longer sought her society as heretofore, leaving her to the assiduous attentions and devotion of another. Could he indeed love her and act thus? was the question which she

so often asked herself. Then she would weep bitterly and passionately as the conviction forced itself upon her mind that she had learnt to love him but too well; that no other could be as dear to her heart as he, no other fill the place which she had once fondly hoped would have been his. Why, why had he so changed! During the last three months (so long they had seemed to Amy) he had seldom come to the Priory, except when (as in the present instance) a formal invitation obliged him to do so. And throughout the whole of that morning he had scarcely exchanged a word with her, studiously avoiding all opportunity for private conversation. What could it all mean? Had she forfeited his esteem by some light word or jest; did he think her so frivolous or vain, that she indeed preferred the society and conversation of the gay fashionable Henry Vaughan to his? Ah! she would show him that evening that it was not so—she would cast aside all scruples, seek him out, and ask

him whether she had offended him—what had altered him so. Surely, surely, then (and Amy's cheek flushed brightly with that hope) it might be again as it had once been, and she should be once more happy in the knowledge of his love.

But the evening passed away and no Ernest came.

She had heard him accept the invitation for the evening, and yet he had not come. Sick at heart at her friend's loss, and the bitter disappointment of Ernest's non-appearance, Amy retired at last to her room. The young girl who had served as waiting maid for both her and Julia, gazed concernedly at her young mistress's face—usually so bright and happy, now so overshadowed with melancholy.

"You must not fret so much, dear Miss Amy, about Miss Julia's going away. She will be very happy, I am sure, with Mr. Mildmay—such a good handsome gentleman,

and it won't be long before you see her again."

"I know, Fanny, but I cannot help feeling very dull to night, You need not trouble about my hair; you must be very tired so late as it is, and having had so much to do to-day."

"Oh no, Miss; I am not so tired now. I have had a nice rest this evening. Mrs. Norton told me I might sit in the study, and look on at the dancing for a while, if I liked. I saw you, Miss, and Mr. Vaughan, and I thought in my heart you were the most beautiful young lady there. And so I sat quiet, seeing you when you little thought it, Miss; and then Mr. Graham coming in, and seeming as if he too wanted to stay in there and look on, I thought I had better go away."

"Mr. Graham, Fanny—why, how was it he did not come into the drawing-room? I did not see him the whole evening."

"Ah, I don't wonder at that, Miss, for he

only stopped a very little while, sitting there all in the shade, as if he did not wish to be seen by anybody, but just to look on a little. He went away very soon, I know, because I saw him cross the hall as if he was in a great hurry a short time afterwards, and then I went back to my place. I think you were singing when he went, Miss."

"Oh! indeed. Thank you, Fanny, that will do. I can arrange the rest myself. You can go now."

"Very well, miss, good night."

"Good night."

The usually clear young voice quivered sadly, and her face was averted that the maid might not see the tears, which, in spite of all her efforts, would force their way. When she at length found herself alone, she sank on her knees by the bedside, and gave way to a burst of uncontrollable grief.

He had come then, but had not cared even to speak to her! It was too much—cruel,

cruel Ernest; and amidst the passionate sobs which convulsed her young frame, she prayed fervently for comfort and consolation from Above, in this the first deep sorrow of her heart. He could not—did not love her. She had deceived herself. Oh! how changed did all things seem to her! Could she ever learn to forget that bright dream of happiness; ever be again the gay, light-hearted girl she had once been! What was her wealth to her, if he whom she so loved looked coldly on her; what her beauty, if the only one she cared to please passed her by unheeded! Oh! what a dreary, dreary void there must be henceforth in her existence; she who had hitherto known only sunshine and happiness, how should she ever be able to bear it?

And poor Amy once more raised her young face, all bathed in tears, imploringly towards heaven, in mute supplication for strength in the bitter hour of her trial. Could Ernest have seen her then, and heard his name uttered in

those despairing accents, how different would have been his feelings! But it was not to be; he must first learn to bow submissively to the will of God—learn to resign with patience the most cherished idol of his heart.

Those three months had seemed long to Amy, but doubly long had they seemed to him in his despair and misery. He had struggled and striven in vain to banish her image from his heart. He had avoided all intercourse with her in hopes of being able to forget, but all in vain. There would come the irrepressible longing to see her face once more, to listen again to the voice, whose soft accents he so loved to hear. Thus on the evening of Julia's marriage he had been there, though unnoticed by Amy, and had watched her with jealous anguish and despair, whilst the assiduous Henry Vaughan sat by her side, whispering his soft nothings into her ear, and he had seen with a faint glimmer of a hope he scarcely dared to cherish, that Amy's eyes

were turned away as if in indifference, that she looked around her with a wearied look as if his society were irksome to her. Could it be that after all she loved him not; that her heart was still free? Ernest's heart beat wildly with that hope, and he was on the point of hastening forward to greet her, and free her from the attention which seemed so distasteful to her, when a sudden change in Amy's expressive countenance caused him to pause with a sick revulsion of feeling, and gaze with the intensity of despair at the changing color, the downcast eyes, with which she listened to some speech of her companion. Henry Vaughan did not seem very well pleased, however, at the sudden, deep emotion visible in her face, for he rose hastily from his seat, and with an unusual cloud upon his brow, turned to lead her to the piano. But Ernest saw it not. His eyes were fixed on the face of her by his side. That sudden blush, the downcast eyes. Alas! too well

did he now see all hope was over. She loved him and would be his. One moment he lingered, gave one last, long look at the sweet face of Amy, the words of her song, sung by her with peculiar pathos and feeling, sounding mockingly in his ears—

"That hair is braided not for me,
Those eyes are turned away;
Oh! my heart my heart is breaking
For the love of Alice Grey."

Truly at that moment his heart did seem well-nigh breaking in its deep agony, as hastening from the house, with frantic haste, he took his way across the desolate moor, scarcely heeding the storm of snow and wind which beat on his feverish brow, trying in vain to still the tempest of despair and anguish in his own heart. Faith and trust seemed in that trying moment to forsake him. He had prayed so earnestly that her love might be granted him, and yet, yet it was denied. Why, why he asked, should another, vain,

frivolous, worldly, obtain that which he would have so prized and treasured; for which his gratitude would have been so deep, so unbounded. Dark and bitter were the murmuring thoughts which arose: his soul seemed overwhelmed with a sudden terrible darkness. Faith seemed almost fled. Alas! too often is it thus when we have fixed our heart's deepest affections on things below. There comes the moment when we must be deprived of them, when through the all-seeing wisdom of our Heavenly Father, they are taken from us. But though hard the trial, though bitter the experience thus gained, does it not serve in the end to wean our hearts from earthly objects of affection; does there not come after a time, a sweet feeling of peace and resignation to our troubled spirit. The peace which arises from the knowledge that our heart's warmest love is now fixed on things above; that we have felt and experienced the impossibility of lasting joy and happiness in

this changing world of sin and misery, and therefore look forward to that blessed abode where there is no more parting, no more sin, where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

'Tis true I might have had a richer bride
To share my name, and glitter at my side,
But ah! I want no gems to make me blest,
The richest gem, is her I love the best.

On that same evening far other events were taking place at St. Albans. Strange, that whilst the brother's heart was heavy with such a dreary sense of woe, the sister's was light with joy and happiness; such happiness as in her wildest dreams for the future she had once not dared to anticipate. Arthur Mainwaring had lingered long beyond the time originally fixed upon for his departure, and during those

delightful evenings of uninterrupted intercourse with Mary (for Mrs. Newham frequently prevailed on her to remain with them after the children's usual afternoon lessons), he had learnt even more highly to value her society and conversation.

He had left them at length, but with the parting assurance to Mary, the evening he bade her farewell, that he hoped soon to renew his visit, and undertake the long promised drawing lessons. And with that hope to comfort her she had passed the intervening time in recalling those happy, happy hours, the walks they had had together, the delightful interchange of thought and feeling. Then those last parting words, how were they treasured and remembered—"I shall soon return; don't quite forget me, Miss Graham, while I am away."

Forget him! No, never—never could she forget! She now loved without a doubt or fear intruding to disturb her peace, knowing, as she did, how securely she might rest in the

happy confidence of his honor and truth. And thus, though sorrowful thoughts of Archie would still arise, she consoled herself with thinking that Arthur would perhaps be able to take away that grief also. He had wealth —what might he not do in order to recall him to his home and friends? Thus Mary's heart was once more filled with sweet happy dreams of the future, doubly bright for the dark clouds which had so long overshadowed her destiny. And when at last he returned, when once more by her side, he spoke of his happiness in seeing her again, of how he had looked forward to their meeting—how eagerly she listened and believed!

"Are you then going back again soon to Naples?" she asked, as on the way home he spoke regretfully of the many claims on his time and attention.

"I must return for some time, in order to enter into some final arrangements before leaving there (as I hope shortly to do), and taking up my abode in England."

"In England!" said Mary joyfully, "oh, I am so glad!" then pausing and checking herself, she added more soberly, "it will be so pleasant for you to be near your friends, Mr. and Mrs. Newham."

"Yes; but I have not quite made up my mind as to whether I shall remain in their near neighbourhood or not,"—pausing and hesitating, he added in a low voice, "that determination depends a great deal on you, Miss Graham."

"On me!"

"Yes; on you. Oh, Mary! will you—do you not understand that it remains with you to decide whether or no I remain here; that on you depends the future of my life, whether I am to be happy or miserable." His voice faltered, and he went on speaking passionately and hurriedly, "Yes, Mary, since first I saw you I have felt that you, and you only, were the one I would choose for my wife; that henceforth life without you would be a dreary

blank. I have prayed (oh! how fervently) that you might return my love, might think me worthy of a place in your affections; and I have sometimes hoped—God grant I may not have been deceived!—that it was so, that my love was indeed returned. Say, is it so; may I stay here—will you give me the dear privilege of being your protector through life? Only one word, Mary—may I stay?"

There was a moment's pause, but the hand which he held so fondly clapsed within his own was not withdrawn, and there came at length the low murmured words—"You may stay, Arthur."

"My precious love, now, my Mary, thank you for those words," exclaimed Arthur joyfully, as he pressed her fondly to his heart, kissing away the tears which fell as she continued:

"But so poor, so friendless, can you indeed love me, Arthur?"

"Love you, Mary? Yes, deeply, truly, and

will ever do so. 'Do you think, dearest, that because you have known sorrow and suffering you are the less dear to me on that account. Oh, no! It would indeed be but a poor measure of affection that I bore you, could it be estranged by that which should render you only more dear to my heart. I want not wealth, all that I have will henceforth be yours. I have enough for both; and, Mary, inestimably more precious to me will be the gift of your heart and hand, than the most priceless treasure you could offer."

As Mary listened to that earnest voice, to those low breathed expressions of affection, how did she contrast her noble-hearted Arthur with the selfish, worldly Edward Martin, whom sorrow had alienated, and poverty driven from her side. The blow, which had once seemed so hard to bear, had indeed proved at last a blessing in disguise. What joy it was to know that there was now one whose love would cheer and strengthen her in all her griefs and trials, one on whom she

could so readily depend, to whom she could look with such confidence for counsel and advice! Yes, Mary's heart was indeed light with inexpressible happiness that night, as she wept happy tears of thankfulness and delight on her mother's sympathizing bosom, adding the last comforting assurance that Arthur —(oh! how tenderly she dwelt on that beloved name)—hoped to be able to do something for Archie; he meant to write to him when they had talked it all over. Oh! they should all be so happy now. Ernest, dear Ernest! how glad he would be to hear such news; she would write a long letter to him on the morrow. The morrow—ah! the morrow —what sad, sad news it brought.

When on the following evening, Mary, sitting on a footstool at her mother's knee, recalled the happy events of the day; Arthur's visit, Mrs. Newham's warm expressions of delight and congratulations, the long letter to Ernest, in which she had described her lover and his goodness in all the glowing colours

which her imagination could furnish; as she sat thus repeating over and over again the things he had said, how he had looked, dwelling on each little detail with all the unwearied eloquence of love, they were suddenly startled by the postman's loud, echoing knock.

"Why, who can it be from!" exclaimed Mary, in surprise, as on hastening to the door, she received a letter from Martha, directed in a totally unfamiliar handwriting. "It is for you, mamma; may I open it? I am so anxious to know who it is from!"

"Yes, yes, child; of course."

Mary hastily tore the letter open, and read its contents, with an expression of great sorrow and anxiety gradually over-shadowing her before happy countenance.

It ran thus:

"DEAR MADAM,—

"I regret that the first occasion of my

holding any communication with you should be on a subject which will cause you pain. It grieves me much to be obliged to inform you of the sudden, and rather alarming, illness of your son, Mr. Ernest Graham. I heard this morning from the servant of the house where he resides, that he was taken very ill last night, and the doctor, whom I have seen, informs me that it is a severe attack of brain fever, caused, he imagines, by some grief or trouble, which has preyed on his mind. He has seemed unusually depressed of late, and has shown a distaste for society, and amusement; which I attributed to the recent disappointment and trouble in regard to his brother.

"I am now afraid that there is some more serious cause for disquiet, even than this. As the doctor does not seem to think it would be advisable for him to be removed from St. John's Wood, I write off at once, to inform you of his illness, that you may hasten thither without delay.

"Trusting that he may soon be restored to his former health and cheerfulness,

"I am, my dear Madam,

"Yours, very faithfully,

"ALEXANDER NORTON."

"Oh! mamma!" exclaimed Mary, bursting into tears. "Poor, dear Ernest! He is very ill—brain fever, the doctor says, brought on by some trouble preying on his mind. He has seemed very unhappy lately. I have noticed it in his letters; but to come to this, just now, as I thought we were all going to be so happy!"

"Ah! child, our troubles are beginning again; there will be no more peace for me, I am sure. My poor boys, both in such trouble! There, give me the letter, Mary, let me read it through myself. Ah! I thought it would come to this. It has been too much for him, living there all by himself, and fretting about Archie. Then, having to visit so many poor

people; so depressing to the spirits. Poor, dear boy, he must have some one to nurse him, and yet, how shall I ever be able to get as far as St. John's Wood? Only yesterday, Dr. Gerald told me I must be extremely careful not to catch a fresh cold. Oh, dear, oh, dear! what is to be done?"

"Mamma," exclaimed Mary, eagerly, "may I go? I am sure I could get on very well. I would do exactly as the doctor told me, and would write every day to let you know how he was getting on. I shall not be able to rest at home! Poor darling Ernest! Oh! do let me go, mamma!"

"Well, child, you shall. Only, Mary, remember you must be sure and write every day, mind that. And if he gets worse, why, go I must, even if it kills me."

"Ah! mamma dear, we will trust though, that it will please God soon to restore him to us. He may be almost well again in a day or two."

In spite, however, of Mary's reassuring words, she was extremely anxious in regard to her so fondly loved Ernest, and the hours seemed terribly long to her till morning, impatient as she was to set out at once for St. John's Wood. But it came at length, and bidding her mother an affectionate farewell, with many parting injunctions not to fret too much whilst she was away, and to be sure and tell Arthur, how suddenly she had been obliged to go, &c., &c., Mary took her departure, and in a few minutes was seated in the train on the way to her destination.

CHAPTER XII.

And shouldst thou call me to resign
What most I prize, what most is mine;
I yield thee what was ever thine:
Thy will be done, thy will be done!

It was evening, and Mary sat alone by Ernest's sick bed, listening with tearful eyes to the incoherent, disjointed sentences which fell from his lips as he tossed restlessly from side to side in feverish disquiet. She gazed sorrowfully on the wavy mass of dark hair which rested on the pillow. The doctor had said it must all be cut off on the morrow if his patient did not greatly improve during the

night, and alas! Mary saw no symptoms of improvement in the wandering eyes and feverish pulse. What could have caused his illness? Surely not Archie's loss alone! She listened eagerly to his confused raving, in hopes of gaining some clue to the mystery, but the frequent exclamation, "Help, help; I cannot, cannot bear it!" did not serve to enlighten her as to the reason of his distress. She only saw that there was something which she knew not of, some secret grief, which, in its intensity, had been too much for him to bear. Poor, poor Ernest!

Mary knelt by the bedside, praying fervently, that whatever the blow which had thus struck so deeply to his heart, the wound might be healed, and peace and resignation sent to his troubled mind. As she rose from her knees, she observed him for the first time scanning her face with eager attention; and with the hope that he was recovering consciousness, she bent tenderly over him, saying gently:

"Dear Ernest, it is Mary; do you want anything?"

But the wild light returned almost immediately to his eyes as he turned from her with a look of disappointment, and stretching out his arms with frantic energy, exclaimed in passionate, despairing accents:

"No, no; it is not she. Amy, Amy, Amy, where are you?" then subsiding once more into confused murmurings, he continued—"Lost, lost for ever—lost to me."

Oh! with what anguish did Mary listen to that despairing cry! She saw it all too plainly now. He had loved with all the depth and energy of his nature, and had loved in vain. Alas! for the blight which had fallen on the two dear brothers, whose prospects she had once hoped would be so far brighter than her own! Her happiness, how would it now be overshadowed with sorrowful thoughts of him whose anguish seemed so deep, so overpowering. "For ever lost."

As she gazed on those noble features,

and thought of his goodness and worth, she wondered that he could have loved in vain, that the untold wealth of his affection should have been despised and rejected. Bitter thoughts towards the unknown object of his attachment who had caused all this sorrow, arose in her mind. Had she dared to trifle with him, so noble and true? It was so strange that Ernest should have thus given his heart away without some hopes of being loved in return! And thus Mary mused sorrowfully over this new and unexpected trial through those three trying days which ensued of watching and suspense. Ernest's illness seemed indeed to be becoming more and more serious. The fever continued unabated, and not once during that time had reason returned, not once had he recognized the loving sister who watched over him with such tender solicitude and care.

It was the fourth morning after Mary's arrival; the night had been passed by her as

usual in watching and prayer. If Ernest did not recover his senses that day, the doctor had said with an ominous shake of the head, his ultimate recovery must be very doubtful, and therefore Mary watched now with an agonized heart and trembling eagerness for some sign of returning consciousness. She dared not think of the possibility of that day passing over as the rest had done, in dreary, hopeless misery. Surely, surely God would hear her prayers, and restore him to them!

A low tap at the door roused her from her fixed contemplation of the unconscious form before her, and hastening to the door, she perceived the servant of the house with a tiny note in her hand.

"Who is it from, Sarah?" she inquired, as she hastily tore it open, and proceeded to read the contents.

"A young lady, Miss; she had her veil down when she came in, so I couldn't see her face, but she begged me to give you this

directly, and said she would wait down stairs meanwhile."

Mary's eyes were fixed eagerly on the note, and she seemed scarcely to hear the answer to her question. The words were few :—

"Grant me but a few minutes' private conversation, I implore you. Precious as I know your time must be, you will not regret doing so when you hear all.

"AMY DE VERE."

Amy! The Amy that Ernest loved. Mary turned hastily to the servant.

"Will you stay here for a minute or two, Sarah, and watch Mr. Graham whilst I go downstairs and see the young lady. Mind, if there is the least change in him, you must call me immediately."

"Yes, Miss," and the maid took up her station by the bedside.

Mary hastened down stairs, her heart beat-

ing with a variety of contending emotions. What could this sudden, unexpected visit mean? She laid her trembling hand on the door, hesitated a moment, then opened it, and in another moment found herself face to face with the object of her thoughts, the one whom she had felt almost to hate, as the cause of the unhappiness of her beloved Ernest. But that feeling vanished at the sight of the sweet young face turned towards her; the soft, loving dark eyes which were fixed so anxiously on her face.

One moment they gazed at each other with a sort of wondering admiration, and then a deep blush suffused Amy's cheek and brow:

"You must think it very strange of me to come here disturbing you at such a time, but I could not help it."

Then, as her voice faltered, and tears would force their way, she continued, with her usual winning, childlike frankness:

"But you look so good and amiable, Miss

Graham, I am sure I may tell you at once the object of my visit. Your brother is very ill I hear. Tell, oh! tell me the real truth respecting him. Is he likely to recover?"

"Alas! I do not know," answered Mary, sadly. "The crisis is not yet past."

"One, only one, more question. Do you know the reason of his illness?"

A shade passed over Mary's face, as she said somewhat coldly:

"You, surely, of all people, Miss de Vere, need not ask that question."

"Oh! then it is true, too true, what I have thought and feared!" exclaimed Amy, wildly, burying her face in her hands, and weeping convulsively. "Oh! to think that I should be the cause, I who love him so!" Her voice was choked with sobs.

Mary's tender heart softened again at the sight of her extreme distress.

"There is something in all this that I cannot understand," she said, placing her hand on

the shoulder of the weeping girl beside her. "Will you tell me frankly (as to a sister) all that has passed between yourself and Ernest?"

"Oh! yes, yes, willingly."

And freely, and unreservedly did Amy tell her all, till at last, as she sobbed forth, "and then—and then—I thought he did not care for me, and it made me so unhappy!" Mary's arms were thrown fondly round her, and she imprinted a sister's fond kiss on the fair young brow, whispering consolingly:

"But you know now, Amy, how he loves you, do you not? Oh! to think you should both have so misunderstood each other's hearts and feelings! I see it all; he was afraid you did not love him on account of his poverty, and you fancied it was neglect and indifference which kept him away, and made him avoid you."

And then, as their thoughts returned to the gloomy present, to him, who so dear to both

their hearts seemed on the point of quitting them for ever, they wept in sympathy, each knowing to the full the depth of sorrow which oppressed the other's heart, by the agony of her own feelings.

"But, Mary," exclaimed Amy, suddenly, hastily wiping away her tears, "I am keeping you from him all this time. Oh! go, go, and I will stay here. I may remain here to-day, may I not?" she asked, looking up imploringly into Mary's face. "I cannot go till I know whether there is hope of his recovery!"

"No, no, of course not. Stay as long as you please, dear Amy. We are sisters henceforth, remember," and once more pressing her lips affectionately to Amy's soft cheek, Mary left the room with a heart considerably lightened of the heavy burden which had before oppressed it.

If Ernest did but recover (and surely it would please God to spare a life precious to so many loving hearts), what a bright pros-

pect of happiness lay before him! How would he rejoice to learn that Amy's whole heart was his! Mary pictured the delightful moment when she should tell him that it was so. Oh! how gladly should she watch the dark shadow of despair fading away, and happiness beaming once more on that beloved face!

It was with these thoughts to cheer her, that she sat once more patiently watching beside her brother. There was no change as yet. The same restless movements, and wild exclamations of despair (oh! how she longed for them to cease!) continued. No peace for the poor sufferer's overwrought brain as yet. The long, weary hours went slowly by, and it was with almost the wild intensity of despair that Mary heard at last the measured strokes of three as they resounded from a neighbouring church. Alas! alas! the day was fast going, and no hope had arisen to relieve the agony of suspense.

"Oh! Ernest, Ernest!" she exclaimed

wildly, "speak to me, speak to me once more, my brother!"

She paused hastily, observing that he had turned weariedly on his pillow, seemingly exhausted, and comparatively calm.

"Thank God!" she murmured, "the change has come at length. He will sleep and wake once more sensible, once more himself," and with inexpressible delight she listened intently to the low, measured breathing. The crisis was indeed past. As if in answer to her cry for succour, he now slept peacefully and calmly. Falling on her knees, Mary lifted up a heartfelt prayer of thankfulness to Heaven, then gently closing the door, and begging the servant to be sure and keep all as quite as possible, she hastened to inform Amy of the joyful tidings.

It was Christmas eve, about a week after

the events related above. The soft light of a lamp in Ernest's little chamber fell full on the pale wasted features of the poor invalid, as with his hand fondly clasped within that of Mary, he lay calmly contemplating the well-known objects around him, and ever and anon turning a look full of tenderness on the fair face, which watched his every look and movement with such intense anxiety and love.

"Mary, dearest, I must talk to you to-night. I am really quite strong enough now, and it will relieve my mind of such a heavy load," he sighed deeply as he spoke.

"But, Ernest, I am so afraid of your over-exciting yourself. You were to be kept quite quiet remember."

"Yes, Mary, but the thoughts are here," pressing his hand to his brow, "and it would be such an inexpressible relief to talk to you concerning the uppermost subject of them."

"Well, Ernest darling, do as you please,

only pray do not excite yourself too much; it might do you irreparable harm."

"No, Mary, that time is past. I can now talk calmly of things that but a short time back seemed too painful to be borne. Alas! that it should have been so, that I should ever have so far forgotten the One sure hope and consolation in every trouble. Oh! Mary, I shudder when I think that I was so near death, and so unprepared; with my heart engrossed by its earthly loss and grief, so rebellious in its murmuring against the decrees of Providence. I feel that it was indeed time that my idol should be taken from me, when in my all absorbing creature worship I was learning to forget my Saviour and my God. Thanks, thanks be to Him who has shown me my wickedness in time." A sweet happy smile passed over his face as he continued—"Mary, you said yesterday that you knew all; hear me now, and believe me when I say that the conflict is past. I can give her up—ah!

even the blessing of her love. I can say now with peace and resignation in my heart, 'Thy will, not mine, be done.'"

Mary's tears fell fast on the hand which she pressed lovingly to her lips.

"And if, my brother, you were to hear that God had only given you all this suffering to try your faith, and make you love Him more, above all things, if in His mercy He still granted you that which you so earnestly desired, knowing that now, after this bitter trial, you would not love her too much, if—"

"Hush, Mary, do not talk thus. It can never be! I shall pray for her happiness, pray that he whom she loves may become worthy of her; but never again give way to dreams—vain, idle dreams, of what can never be."

"And why never, Ernest? If she loves you, would you now reject, cast her love away? Would you not rather bless Him, who was too merciful thus to blight all your happiness in

this world; who would only show you the sin of loving things here too much?"

Ernest's pale cheek flushed, and he turned an eager enquiring gaze on Mary's earnest face as she bent tenderly over him.

"Why do you talk thus, Mary? What do you know of her—of Amy? Tell me—oh! tell me quickly!"

"Ernest, my own brother," and Mary's arms were clasped fondly round him, "Amy loves you—is here now, has been here every day since your illness. She has told me all herself—her heart is yours—has been always yours, though you knew it not. Ah! Ernest, there are brighter days in store for us now. Listen to those sweet Christmas bells, do they not seem to whisper that the loving Saviour who came to die for us, who has watched over us through all our trials, will now reward us by giving joy, happiness, and peace at last."

CHAPTER XIII.

But if, O God, the sunnier sky
Thy love should deign—the happy scene,
O! as the joy-winged moments fly
Be mine, the hour of thought between;
That quiet hour, still, still to share,
When every thought we breathe is prayer.

"Oh! Mary, I do not think I can see him all alone—you come in too."

"Nonsense, Amy. You would not thank me for doing so I am sure. There, good bye for the present," and opening the door leading into the little parlour, Mary gently pushed the blushing Amy into Ernest's presence.

It was the first meeting of the lovers since his illness, and Amy's heart beat quick as she

found herself once more in the presence of him she loved. She stood confused and hesitating, not daring to raise her eyes, till her name, tenderly uttered in the well-known voice, caused her to look up. Yes, there he was once more, but oh! how sadly changed. She burst into tears.

"Ernest, Ernest, oh! how you must have suffered, and I, I the cause of all. Can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, Amy. Ah! if you knew how thankful I feel for what has been the means of assuring me of your love. But can you indeed love me? I can scarcely believe that my happiness is real. Oh! look up, Amy, tell me that it is so with your own lips!"

"Then, Ernest," and Amy raised her sweet blushing face to his, the tears yet glistening on the long, dark lashes; "hear me now repeat that I love, have ever loved you, better than anything, everything this world can

offer. Why, why have you ever doubted me? Ah! I thought you saw all too plainly that my heart was yours!"

"How could I think so, Amy, when you smiled on others? Do you not remember the other evening, how happy you seemed in the society of another? The smile, the blush, with which you listened to Henry Vaughan's flattering words. Ah! Amy, even now my heart fails me when I recall all this."

"Ernest!" and Amy's soft eyes looked up reproachfully into his: "Can you indeed thus doubt me? Never, never have I given Henry Vanghan reason to think his affection was returned. On the day after Julia's marriage, when he asked me to be his wife, my answer was, that my heart was no longer my own to give. Ah, Ernest, you know into whose keeping I have relinquished it."

A bright flush passed over Ernest's brow; but the shadow resting there was not entirely dispelled.

"Amy, forgive me. I do not distrust your word, but I doubt whether you understand aright the real feelings of your heart. If you knew the agony with which I marked every change in your countenance (and, I know its alternations well), on that eventful night, watched you, as with him by your side you seemed so bright and happy, Ah! Amy if—"

"Stop, Ernest." A sudden light seemed to break in upon Amy's mind as she listened to his words. "Stop! One thing I want to ask you. Was it indeed, just before I sang that you thus watched me in conversation with Henry Vaughan? Then, listen. It was your name which called forth that blush and smile, the thought of you which made my face happier than it had been before. That long, long evening, how wearisome it seemed to me at last, when you did not come. But, I will tell you at once exactly how it all was, and then no more jealous fears, I hope, for it grieves me, hurts

me so much, Ernest, for you still to doubt my love. You know, you had said you would come that evening. I sat, nervous and excited, watching every arrival, scarcely hearing Henry Vaughan's stupid conversation, till he suddenly mentioned your name; then, I turned quickly, thinking perhaps, you had entered by the other door unperceived by me. Ah! Ernest, I know well that I blushed then, for I felt the hot blood rise to my cheek at the sudden mention of the name ever uppermost in my thoughts. It was, however, only some casual remark of his on your sermons, a depreciating one I believe, for I remember answering somewhat warmly in your defence; and throughout the remainder of the evening I avoided him as much as possible. Nevertheless his conceit and high opinion of himself still led him (as you know already), on the following morning to make me the offer of his heart and hand, which he seemed extremely astonished to find were to be offered in vain. Oh! I

little thought your eyes were on me that evening. But you understand it all now; you doubt no longer, Ernest?"

"Doubt you, Amy," Ernest's voice faltered with the deep joy and thankfulness of his heart. "Never again. My own darling, how have I made both you and myself miserable, through my jealous fears! I do not deserve the happiness of this moment: to know that you will indeed be my own, my Amy, ah! happiness indeed."

"And I, Ernest, feel unworthy (oh, how unworthy)! of your love. But you will teach me, make me better, will you not?"

"We will together strive to become better, my Amy, and ever in all our joys and sorrows look upwards for hope and strength, in the hour of our need. He who has given us to each other will, I hope, have in return our deepest gratitude and love. With what different feelings shall I now look forward to the future! With you, my own dearest,

ever by my side, how changed will all things appear to me. Ah! Amy, Amy, you do not, cannot know how much I love you!"

"Yes, I do know, Ernest," she said simply, laying her hand on her heart, "here, here by my own feelings, what a strange thing is love! That two people, but a short time back utter strangers to each other, should thus fix all their earthly hopes of happiness on the other. Oh! do you know, Ernest, I wish I could make all true hearts that love as happy as ourselves!"

"Yes indeed, darling, I wish so too."

"Well, Ernest, and we might do a good deal towards it; and can't you guess how?" she asked with an arch smile.

"No, indeed, that goes quite beyond me, Amy."

"Why, I should like to write a book, in which I gave this piece of advice to all loving lovers. Instead of giving way to doubts and jealous fears," (ah, Amy!) "yes, well you

must not interrupt please, Mr. Ernest, instead of giving way, I repeat, to doubts and jealous fears, which occasion no end of misunderstanding and misery, if there is the least ground for hope, let the lover tell the object of his affection plainly at once that he loves her, and not go on thinking, fearing, and watching away days, and months, and years; in short, very often losing the one he loves at last through his own procrastination. For see, Ernest," she added, in a more serious tone, "how we have misunderstood each other, neither thinking at last that our love was returned. Ah! I do really and seriously wish I could put a stop to all such miserably foolish proceedings."

Ernest smiled as he pressed the hand which he held in his, tenderly to his lips.

"It is all past now, Amy; we will no longer talk of that unhappy time. Say once more that you have forgiven me, and—" (he drew the bright face gently towards him)

"and those words too, dearest, once again, 'I love you, Ernest.'"

"I love you, Ernest."

Those low murmured words, they were indeed music to his ears; and with what delight did he listen as she told him how long and how often she had thought of him, how treasured every token of his affection!

Those were indeed happy, happy days when Ernest (still too weak to resume his accustomed duties), with Mary and Amy by his side to read to him, to sing his favorite songs, and wile away the long tedious hours of his confinement, looked forward with hope and joy to the, once so dark and gloomy, future. Often whilst gazing on the beautiful face (doubly beautiful now with its bright beaming smiles of happiness), he would recall the time when, even whilst he gazed and admired, the sickening anguish of despair, and the bitter thought that she never could be his, had banished all peace and joy from his heart. How changed

were all things now! He would often steal away (even from her loved presence), and on his knees pour forth the deep gratitude of his soul for the love which had thus mercifully over-ruled all things for his good; pray too, that never again might he forget the Giver in the gift, but ever keep Him in mind, who in the darkest hour of sorrow would still guide and direct his steps; who, in spite of all his doubting thoughts, had in his own good time granted him the one ardent wish of his heart, the precious boon so often and earnestly implored.

And Mary, with what joy did she look on and see the happiness of those two dear ones —for Amy had already endeared herself greatly to her new sister's heart—with what delight she informed her mother and Arthur of the good news, receiving in return a most complicated, almost unintelligible reply from poor Mrs. Graham, in which was enclosed a congratulatory epistle for Ernest blotted all

over with tears, and thereby strangely belied the writer's expressions of extreme joy at the happy event.

Perhaps in that moment when she heard of the changed fortunes of Ernest and Mary, even whilst she rejoiced, the poor mother's heart ached at the thoughts of her youngest and beloved one; and, contrasting his fate with theirs, with that strange intensity of love which turns ever with redoubled affection to the one in trouble or disgrace, mourned over him with re-awakened anguish at his loss.

Neither was he forgotten by the brother and sister, even in their joy. The thoughts of the one missing in that happy little group, the one dear voice ever formerly the first to tell them how he rejoiced in their happiness, often sent a deep, deep pang to their hearts; and with tearful eyes Mary talked to Amy of her other brother—the Archie whom they so loved!—but who, in the struggle with the miseries of poverty had lost heart, and had left them to

go to a foreign land. And Amy, when she heard all, of his many noble qualities and affectionate loving disposition, wept in very sympathy for the sister's distress over his blighted prospects.

"But, Mary," she would say consolingly, after listening with unwearied interest to the details of Archie's earlier life, "Arthur—your Arthur—whom you are always talking about so much, who loves you so, will arrange something so that Archie may come home again. Cheer up, dear Mary, it may not be long before you meet again."

And Mary would smile through her tears at the delightful thought, and returning Amy's loving kiss of sympathy, thank her for her comforting words. In the midst of all the changes which were taking place, Julia—now Mrs. Mildmay—returned, and having heard of Amy's engagement, hastened to offer to both her warm sisterly congratulations.

"Ah! Amy," she whispered, as she once

more clasped her friend in a fond embrace, "it is just as Charles and I have thought, and wished it would be all along. Ernest Graham is the only one to whom I can yield my dear Amy without a pang of regret; and you, Amy, are the only girl I know who is worthy of Ernest Graham."

CHAPTER XIV.

Oh! well such heart may lift its cry
From that worst deep to save,
That hopeless, tearless agony,
That sea without a wave!

E. L. MONTAGU.

IT is sad to turn from scenes of love and happiness to those of misery and crime, yet so must it ever be in this world of change and sorrow. Even whilst the sounds of joy and happiness fall on our ear, we know that near, ah! perhaps nearer even than we dream, sad scenes are being enacted, scenes from which our fancy recoils in horror, and the very idea of which we would fain banish from our mind.

It was New Year's day. There is something very solemn in the thought that we are about to enter upon a New Year. What were our joys and sorrows during the one now past, lost to us for ever; what may not the next bring us of mingled happiness and woe! And oh! awful, solemn thought—shall we live to see another New Year's Day, and will the circle of our loved ones remain unbroken; are there not some links already severed; may there not be more! Ah! who can tell what that ensuing year may bring forth! Surely our fervent prayers should arise for fresh strength to cheer us on our upward road, not knowing how soon our fortitude may be required, what changes may befall us ere the opening year again closes.

We must beg the reader once more to accompany us to the abode of Mr. Morrice. It is now long, very long since that evening when we last saw him, when stifling the lingering scruples of remorse at his treachery

and deceit, he destroyed those letters written in all the confidence of a generous, loving disposition, who would as soon doubt his own honor and truth, as that of the friend he had chosen. Yes, five years had passed away, and Morrice Clifton had prospered; all things had gone well with him, and though as from time to time he heard of the increasing troubles of the Graham family, or the sudden annihilation of all their hopes in regard to Archie, a trouble which his conscience told him might have been spared them had he repaid the money which would have furnished the means for obtaining his commission, he shuddered when he thought of him whose last injunction had been to aid his children if in his power to to so; still he consoled himself with the idea that his treachery was unknown to the world. In the world's eyes he was respectable, upright, and just; what mattered it then? There seemed to be no avenging hand stretched out to punish; no watchful eye marking all his

movements; his conscience became hardened; it was seldom, very seldom now, that a feeling of compunction visited his heart.

Thus had the years sped on, bringing sorrow and grief to many, but leaving Mr. Morrice all unscathed by the hand of Time, with increasing wealth and comfort surrounding him; thus did the New Year's morning open upon him as, in all the confidence of his growing celebrity and fast increasing gains, he sat at the breakfast table with a complacent smile on his lips, glancing from time to time at the long file of bills by his side, which would all be paid within the ensuing week.

Yes, would, and must. What mattered it though the poor widow, whose only son now lay dead, unable longer to aid her by his ready hand to obtain a livelihood, had implored him with tearful eyes to wait but a little longer ere he took her all of worldly wealth, her few remaining arti-

cles of scanty furniture; what mattered it though the payment of these bills caused many a poor father, already weak and desponding through long illness, and the hard, hard struggle with poverty during that dreary winter, to give up entirely; caused the loving hearts of wife, mother, child to be separated, to go their own way in the world and gain their bread as best they might! What mattered all this to that sordid, worldly man, whose only thought was for his gold; who with obsequious flattery fawned on the rich and great, but who had only harsh, cold words for the humble poor! And thus he sat absorbed in his calculations: no holy, serious thoughts in his heart on that bright, New Year's morning; no resolutions for good; no aspirations after higher, nobler things.

His breakfast over, he drew the bills towards him, and commenced a most minute investigation of them. But a minute or two had elapsed, however, when he was roused by

the entrance of a domestic, bearing some letters, which she handed to her master.

"Ah! thank you Molly," he said carelessly, "put them on the table; that will do."

The servant obeyed and withdrew, and the letters remained some moments untouched—those letters, one of which contained news which would alter the prospect of all things to that worldly sinful man, who so little thinks what a yawning precipice is opening at his feet.

At length he took one up, glanced at the superscription, and broke the seal. What was it that caused the sudden death-like pallor, that convulsive clasp of the chair for support? The punishment had come at length, he was a ruined man—the bank wherein his so treasured gold had been invested had failed, (so said the fatal letter, written in terms of condolence by a friend in town), failed!—and that for which he had sinned, bartered his honor (nay, the well-being of his immortal soul) was lost—irretrievably lost!

Ah! who shall say, who can comprehend

the terrific force with which that knowledge crushed the very life out of the heart of that wretched man; the conviction, which then for the first time forced itself upon his mind, that there was indeed a God to avenge and punish, to protect the fatherless and widow, and repay the base defrauder of their rights by taking from him that for which he had slaved and sinned through many a long year. No hope, no sweet consolation from above in that terrible hour of trial. He had lived without God in the world, and now he almost cursed the hand which had dealt the blow (as he well knew, a just retribution for his crime), that had brought him to the dust.

An hour passed away, and he had remained with livid face and clenched hand absorbed in thought; then suddenly rising from his seat with a strange unnatural calmness he destroyed the letter, placed the bills in the bureau, and after putting the key in its usual place amongst the others, with mechanical precision, he rang the bell.

"Tell James to saddle the horse," he said, as the servant re-appeared, "and quickly."

"Yes, sir."

The maid lingered, gazing with a curious half-frightened stare at the ghastly pallor of her master's countenance, but on his demanding sternly what she was waiting for, she departed hastily, informing the stable boy James, on repeating the orders she had received, that "master looked so awful white and queer, she couldn't think what had come over him."

And Mr. Morrice departed, and after the lapse of an hour returned, and retired to his study with a strict injunction not on any account to be disturbed; and the hours passed by and there he still remained, till at last, when evening came the servants hesitated as to what they should do. He had said he must not be disturbed, "but surely, Molly," said James, whom the puzzled servant girl had called up to a private consultation, "he would not mind your asking him whether he will have some dinner?"

"I don't know, Jim," and the girl shook her head hesitatingly; "Master has been so odd all day, and so terrible cross that—"

She stopped suddenly, and both started and gazed at each other with a wild look of horror, as the loud report of a pistol resounded through the house.

"Jim, Jim! the master!" gasped the girl, convulsively grasping her companion's arm; "it came from there I am sure. Oh, dear! oh, dear! what has he done—whatever shall we do, Jim?"

"We must go and alarm the neighbourhood, Molly; come quick," and the two panic stricken servants hastened into the street, informing the first passer by of their fear that Mr. Morrice had committed suicide.

Quickly did the report spread, and in a few minutes a large crowd collected round the house; whilst accompanied by several neighbours, the trembling Jim led the way towards his master's study. No answer to their appeal for admittance, and the door was fas-

tened from within. Implements were immediately fetched and applied to force an entrance; several minutes more of terrible suspense to the bystanders, and then the lock gave way, and there, stretched lifeless in a pool of blood, with a pistol—the fatal instrument of death—still held in his nerveless hand, lay the corpse of the miserable erring Morrice Clifton.

CHAPTER XV.

Alas! for human sacrifice,
The stain of every clime,
For all whose youth unpitied dies,
The lost, the doomed of time.
Ah! well, well may that promised shore
Be bright with tearless bliss,
If it to withered hearts restore
Their summers lost on this.

FRANCIS BROWN.

IT was a beautiful summer's evening, towards the end of July. Mary, Arthur, and Amy were seated on the rustic bench in the little garden belonging to "the Cottage," engaged in earnest conversation. A year had passed away since that last memorable evening before Archie's departure, and it was of

him they now spoke in deep anxiety for his future fate.

Arthur's letter, written soon after his engagement with Mary, begging him to name the sum he would require to procure his discharge and passage home, and receive it from him as from a brother, had remained unanswered; and now war had broken out in India—that terrible mutiny which brought such sorrow to so many English hearths and homes—and the fear for their beloved Archie destroyed all the peace and happiness which they had fondly hoped would once again be theirs. As each day brought fresh tidings of the horrors perpetrated, the thousands slain, Mary's heart sank within her as she pictured him, the darling of all their hearts, wounded, perhaps dying in that foreign land, with none near to succour or to save, to soothe his agony with loving words and gentle care.

"Oh! Arthur, Amy, had you known him, you too would have loved him!" she ex-

claimed, as after dwelling on each little incident of that last happy evening they had spent together, and describing him, his looks, and loveable disposition, to her sympathizing companions, she sobbed forth, "And now, perhaps, I shall never, never see him again!"

"Dearest Mary," said Arthur, tenderly pressing the hand he held in his, "remember there is One who will watch over him even in the midst of the most terrible dangers. Do not despair of seeing him yet again." His voice faltered, as he continued, "I have prayed daily that I might be permitted to see once more in this world one equally dear to me; my brother, too, Mary, whom you know was even as beloved by me, and yet who, like Archie, ruined his own happiness and that of his friends by one false step, one grievous error. But," (he looked up trustingly at the blue sky above them as he spoke) "something seems to tell me that my prayers will be answered, that we shall meet again. Let us

have more faith, darling, and trust that both our wanderers may, indeed, be restored to us once more."

"It is strange that poor mamma, in all things else so fearful and doubting, should, like you, Arthur, still live in the hope of seeing Archie again. She often says to me, even while she shudders and weeps over the recital of the horrors and dangers to which he is exposed, 'My poor Archie, to think he should be amongst such scenes as these! I could never bear it, were it not that I still trust to the God who hears the prayers of the poor widow for her fatherless boy, who will surely preserve him to see his poor old mother once again.' Ah! I know I ought to have more faith, Arthur, but still I tremble when I hear of so many sons and fathers equally beloved, yet slain amidst such awful tortures, such heart-rending scenes."

"Mary," said Amy, sorrowfully, "even though in trouble now, I envy you. To have

a brother, two dear brothers, a mother; and I, I, an orphan, have no sisters, no brothers of my own."

"Dear Amy, do not say so. Am I not your sister? Is not Archie your brother, too?"

"And I, too, Amy, you must not forget me either," said Arthur, smilingly. "Why I consider you are very rich in brothers and sisters!"

Amy returned the smile, though still rather sadly, as she answered:

"A year or two ago with wealth and everything else to make me happy, I used often to sigh when I thought how truly alone I was in the world. God's gifts are more equally divided than people think for. Till I knew Ernest and you all, so dear to me now, I, the heiress, whom many envied, was not truly happy. I wanted more than kind friends, I longed for some one to whom I, too, should be all in all; a sister, a brother,——"

"Or a lover," interrupted Arthur, gaily, "which you have got now, Amy, and a very devoted one, that you must confess. Come," he added, rising from his seat, and offering an arm to each, "we will go for a stroll this beautiful evening, and, if possible, not get on to gloomy subjects again, or I shall have Ernest scolding me finely when he comes down next Wednesday, and finds his fair roses faded. We will all look on the bright side of things as much as possible, and (your own saying, Mary, that I have learnt from you) 'never despair;' indeed," he continued, more seriously, "those who trust in God ought never to despair."

o o o o o

During the six months which we have passed over, but few changes had taken place in the general state of things relating to those connected with our story, excepting the events

above-mentioned. Amy had decided to make the Graham's house her home, and very sweet and pleasant was the companionship of the two young girls, both of so truly amiable and loveable dispositions. Ernest, long since restored to health, had arranged to spend a day with them once every three weeks, and thus the little family party would have been complete in its happiness and re-union, had it not been for their anxiety respecting Archie.

Days, weeks, and months passed by, and still no news of the lost one. At that terrible time of suspense and anguish, many a fond mother's and sister's heart was, like theirs, tortured by a continual dread of the news which might destroy their last lingering spark of hope; many alas! did indeed have to mourn over those, who, in the bloom and vigour of manhood, met with an untimely grave on that far-off battle field, who had, departing with bright hopes and bounding hearts,

returned to their native land no more; but, after enduring hardships, which were indeed enough to wear all spirit and life away, died perhaps an ignoble death, with the beloved names of home, country, friends, yet lingering on their lips, and mingling with the roar of the cannon and din of war. In some hearts the remembrance of that awful time can never die away, for, alas! they have yet to mourn over those, who, though spared from amidst the horrors of those days, are yet even as lost to them as if death's awful arm had indeed swept them from the land of the living. Ah! even *more* lost, for surely the bitter anguish of beholding the total wreck of reason in one we love is worse—a thousand times worse, than death; and many were the strong hearts that failed, sickened at last in beholding the atrocities daily perpetrated; many the noble minds which gave way under the intense horror of the scenes which surrounded them.

Ah! India, India! how many brave, British hearts sleep beneath thy waving palm trees; how many precious lives have been sacrificed for thee, fair country of the East!

CHAPTER XVI.

"Good news, mamma," said Mary, one morning, entering the sitting room, where Mrs. Graham and Amy sat at work. "I was on the look-out for the postman as usual, and seeing he was coming here, went to meet him, and look, at last we have a letter from Archie. The foreign post-mark, his dear hand-writing, oh! how thankful I am to see it once again!"

"Ah! indeed; thank God!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, fervently, "at last, at last," and she fixed her eyes in trembling eagerness

on the welcome letter, watching Mary with intense anxiety as she proceeded to break the seal.

Pressing the closely written pages to her lips, with tearful eyes, Mary commenced reading its contents in a voice often hoarse and low with suppressed emotion :—

"My Beloved Sister,

"How shall I excuse myself to you for my long silence, which I fear has occasioned you all much anxiety, I cannot by letter explain, though had I an opportunity of conversing with you for only a few minutes, I could perhaps give you an idea of the difficulties of my situation, which I must now assign as the reason for the very irregular correspondence I have held, which I deeply regret. I have no place whither I can retire in private to write, and in a crowded tent I find it inconvenient and impossible to give free expression to my sentiments, consequently, I am obliged

to scrawl a few lines where and how I can. God bless you all, my beloved, far-distant friends! I am well; have hitherto been mercifully preserved through the many dangers which you are doubtless aware, from the reports of the *Times*, now surround me. We have been engaged in active service, and are now on the point of leaving here for Barrackpoor, for the purpose of quelling some disturbances and insubordination which have arisen there among the Sepoys.

"There have been several executions of the leaders of the insurgents, and even as I write, the gallows are being erected in my immediate vicinity, for the execution of a Native Officer, who it appears has been one of the aiders and abettors in the recent outrages. Amidst the horrors by which I am surrounded my heart reverts to my dear, peaceful, English home, and in my remembrance I recall your faces to my mind with past scenes, and they often afford me matter for painful, mournful

retrospection. Do not think for one instant you are forgotten amidst all the trials, reproach, and suffering which my folly and wickedness have brought upon me. No! my heart is still alive with the deepest, warmest affection for you all. Had I only foreseen all that has happened, how differently would I have acted! But regrets for the past are now fruitless. Experience is the best teacher, and I have profited by its lessons. I will make a point of writing you a long letter, as soon as events permit of my doing so, in which I will endeavour clearly and satisfactorily to explain to you my situation and prospects. Meantime, dearest sister, rest satisfied, I beg of you, with the knowledge that I am well. This brief epistle is addressed to you all; to my beloved mother, Ernest, and yourself, to all of whom my truest love is transmitted. It will at least in some measure relieve the anxiety you feel for my safety. Ah! Mary, should I indeed be spared to see your dear face again,

I trust you will find you have a brother more worthy of your love than the headstrong Archie of former days.

"Forgive me for the misery I have caused you. At this moment, inexpressible emotion swells my heart. I stretch out my arms with a wild, wild longing to be away from these scenes of devastation and horror, to be clasped once more to the loving hearts of mother, sister, brother.

"Farewell, farewell, my best loved ones; should I fall, that my errors and follies may be forgiven, that we may meet before the throne of glory is the fervent prayer of

"Your ever affectionate brother,

"ARCHIE!"

There was many a choking sob from the little group, as Mary read the last touching words, and Mrs. Graham stretched out her hand eagerly for the precious letter, exclaiming:

"But Arthur's letter, he does not allude to that. Are you quite sure you have read all, Mary?"

"Yes, mamma, I have read all," she answered sorrowfully. "The letter missed, you may be sure, or he would not have thus passed it over without some remark. But there, it matters little now you know—during this time of war none can be bought off. We must wait till it is over before Arthur writes again," said Mary, sighing wearily.

"Ah! and what may not have happened before that time? But he was safe, Mary, safe and well, when he wrote this. My darling! To think of his asking us for our forgiveness! Oh! when shall I hold him in my arms once more, and tell him how long ago all was forgotten and forgiven!"

"Dear Mrs. Graham, dear Mary," said Amy, winding her arm caressingly round Mary's neck, and wiping away the fast falling tears; "but a day or two ago how thankful

you would have been, had any one said—You will soon have news from Archie. And it is on the whole, good news. He was safe when he wrote this, and yet had been amongst many, many dangers. May not the same Hand which guarded him then, preserve him henceforth in all his future perils?"

"Yes, Amy, I know," answered Mary, pressing her hand convulsively; "but, oh! to read how he longs now to see us again, how he reproaches himself for what he has done; it well-nigh breaks my heart!"

"Mary dearest, have courage, I have good news for you," said a well-known voice, and Arthur, who had entered unperceived by them all in their agitation and distress, stood by their side flushed and agitated, an open letter in his hand. "Ah! Mary, my joy, it will be yours also, for he will free Archie, restore him to you; my brother Edgar, found at last."

A glad cry burst from Mary's lips.

"Edgar your brother, found. Is it possible? Oh! Arthur, how I rejoice with you in your joy. Tell me quickly, how, when?"

"A letter came for me by the same mail as the one you have just received. How wonderfully has God overruled and directed all things! Strange fatality that both our lost ones should come so near, in the same country, well nigh the same spot. But to return. I could, as you may imagine, scarcely believe my eyes, when I recognised the well-known, so well remembered handwriting of my long lost brother. Having heard, through a friend, of my long continued, anxious search for him, he had taken heart, and written at last to entreat me to forgive the past, and receive him once again. Receive him! Oh! with what joy! Mary!" exclaimed Arthur passionately, in a sudden burst of emotion, "how I have longed, how prayed for this hour, you and you only know, my own dearest!"

Mary looked up lovingly into his face, with tearful eyes.

"I know, I know, Arthur. Ah! what happiness for you! Would that we could even so rejoice over the recovery of our Archie, who is so unhappy, who now sees and deeply regrets the folly of the step he has taken."

"Read, read, Mary," and Arthur handed her the letter, with sparkling eyes. "They are near, the address is almost the same. I shall write to him, to Edgar, immediately, and tell him that directly the war ceases (and, surely, surely it cannot be long ere the rebellion is quelled—fresh troops are being sent out daily); he must arrange it all, buy him off, and then they can return to England together. Edgar himself tells me he must unavoidably be detained in India some time longer, so it will just do. Oh! never fear now, dear Mary, it will all be right at last."

CHAPTER XVIII.

O! fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

LONGFELLOW.

GREAT was the joy of all as they listened to Arthur's words, and with hearts once more filled with hope, they looked forward to reunion with their lost ones. They knew not then (and it was well for them that it was so), the long months, nay years, that must still intervene ere that disastrous war would cease, or the sickening anguish of suspense they must

still endure ere they indeed looked on those beloved faces.

Time passed on, the horrors of the Indian Mutiny still continued, and the bright hopes and anticipations of Archie's return grew, at length, but dim and faint in Mary's heart. No longer could she trust to see his dear face amongst the little circle of beloved ones, who would be present at her marriage.

It had now been twice postponed in the hope that there might yet arrive the welcome news of the speedy return of the wanderers, but as the dreary months passed by, and at last that hope became like some far off dream of happiness never to be realised, Mary could no longer refuse to yield to Arthur's earnest solicitations for their union. With true tact and tenderness he had hitherto forborne from pressing the point, but on receiving a letter informing him that his presence would soon be required in Naples, on business of importance, and that his stay might be protracted

for an uncertain period, he entreated her to allow their union to take place at once, without farther delay, that she might accompany him thither, and thus spare each other a protracted separation. Mary felt it would be almost selfish to deny his request, and expect him continually to yield up his wishes to hers, and, therefore, with her usual sweet simplicity, and straightforwardness, even as she had said on that eventful evening, when he first told her of his love, "You may stay, Arthur," did she now, looking up trustingly into his face, add the promise, "I will go with you, dear Arthur; you have ever consulted my wishes; it is time that I should consult yours."

And thus it was arranged, that their marriage should take place within three weeks; Mary's few, simple arrangements requiring but a short time for their completion, and it being besides determined that all should be as quiet and private as possible. Mary felt that

she could not bear unnecessary display at such a time as that, with the one, so beloved, missing from amongst them, living in scenes of horror and death, or perhaps (and she shuddered at the thought), then lying amongst the slain. Mr. and Mrs. Newham were to be the only guests. The former was to act in the capacity of father to the bride, but told Mary, laughingly, that he did not know how he should ever make up his mind to give her away, for (turning to Mrs. Newham, who stood smiling and happy at the prospect of the union of those whom, next to her own dear ones, she most esteemed and loved); "what shall we ever do, Lucy, without our dear Miss Graham?"

"Rather," said Mary, smiling, as she pressed the hand of her kind friend in hers: "rather let me say, what should I ever have done without you?"

The weeks flew quickly by. It was the eve of Mary's marriage, and the day over with all its bustle, and confusion of preparation,

she sat at length in her own little room, gazing thoughtfully on the well-known, familiar objects, each of which had become so endeared to her heart by some associations connected with the past. Who has not felt that strange tenderness, for even the most insignificant articles of household furniture, when about to leave them and home for other places, and other scenes, perhaps for ever? With Mary it was for ever. Never again would she return to that cottage home, the scene of her many trials and sorrows, for it was determined that after her departure Mrs. Graham and Amy should take apartments at St. John's Wood, as they might then have the pleasure of Ernest's frequent companionship. Thus it was indeed, with a feeling almost of pain that she now looked lovingly around her, recalling the different thoughts and feelings with which in former years she had gazed on each familiar object. There she had prayed and wept, bitter tears of an-

guish at Archie's loss, happy ones when first she learned the delightful certainty of Arthur's love.

That love—it was henceforth to be everything to her, and even amidst the sad thoughts and remembrances which arose, it shone out like a bright beacon of hope and happiness for future years.

Oh! how noble and true was the heart whose devoted love it had been her happy lot to obtain. Fonder in sorrow, more devoted in poverty, a happy presage indeed of that unalterable, enduring affection, which would remain the same, through long years of changes and trials.

Earnestly did Mary form the resolution and make the vow, to be in her turn everything to Arthur; her life-long endeavour should be to render him happy, to repay, as far as she could, that generous heart which had given her its whole measure of affection and confidence. And

when she recalled the hardships and trials, which she had been called upon to endure, she became thankful for the discipline which she felt had improved her mind, rendered her less selfish, more strong and patient under affliction and crosses. She was more worthy of him now, than she would have been had her life been all happiness and peace. A counsellor in trouble, one to whom he could turn for sympathy and advice. Yes, thus should be the wife and mother, not a mere thoughtless frivolous being, to be petted and humoured, but with whom deeper, higher communion, is impossible. And Mary's heart told her (and truly), she could and would now be all this. Not in her own strength was the vow made, the resolution taken. No—she prayed on that last evening of her stay in her girlhood's home, that strength might be given her to bear what trials were in store for her in her wedded life; prayed that He who had sent the trouble to chasten and refine, even

the happiness at last, might still guide and direct her footsteps aright. Ah! surely thus should it be that each change, each momentous event in our lives should be undertaken. What could more hallow the solemn vow she was about to make, than prayer; whither could she turn for strength to fulfil it, if not to Him, who is all powerful, all seeing, and all wise?

The shadows of evening darkened the little room, yet still she sat there quiet and absorbed. Thoughts of the past, anticipations for the future flitted before her mind's eye. The future—ah! if we could unfold the mystic pages of that sealed book, wherein lies the secret of our fate, whereon depends our hopes and fears of happiness, how should we tremble and shrink back from the sight of what lay before us. This airy vision destroyed, that bright dream fled! In mercy is it ordained that we should be kept from a knowledge of the sorrows and disappointments that are still in store, of the

dark waters yet to be gone through ere we attain the so desired end, the so longed for object. Else should we utterly despair, and faint under the burden which oppresses us, and with faltering, unsteady steps, and eyes fixed fearfully on impending evils, we should lose all energy, all trustfulness, all hope; the present happiness lost in the dread of future misery.

The voice of Amy roused Mary at length from her reverie, and recalled her to a sense of things actual and present.

"Mary, darling, may I come in? You promised me one last chat, you know."

Mary rose from her seat, and hastily thrusting the little package of Archie's treasured letters into the portfolio by her side, opened the door and admitted her friend.

"Arthur is just come, so I took the opportunity to steal away up here," said Amy, as she seated herself on the low window seat by Mary's side. "Ah! Mary, dear, it seems so like a dream that you are really going away

from us to-morrow. I cannot realize it at all."

Mary gave a half sigh as she answered:

"Nor I, Amy; nevertheless I suppose we must try and realize the fact, or it will come upon us all too suddenly."

"Yes, indeed. Why when I come to think of it, this is your very last evening in the old place, is it not? How strange it must seem to you after so many years!"

"Yes, Amy, it does indeed seem a very great change which is about to take place in my life. Ah! how unhappy I was when first I came into this our little cottage home, and what sorrows we have since known within its walls." Her voice was choked with tears as she continued: "Amy, darling, you will understand my feelings. You know that I love Archie, am happy, as happy as I can be, yet, all is not as I could wish. Archie, dear, dear boy, how he would have rejoiced in his sister's happiness."

"Yes, Mary love, I know what you feel,

but God may preserve Archie to you yet. I cannot believe that it should be His will, so often and fervently as you have prayed for his return, that your petitions should be denied."

Both were silent for a time. Amy attempted not to check the tears which fell so fast, knowing the relief they would bring to her friend's full heart, till at last Mary raised her head and withdrew herself from her loving embrace, saying:

"Thank you; thank you, dear Amy. You always understand so well what is best for me. I am better now. Tell me how did mamma seem when you were alone with her before Arthur came?"

Amy smiled.

"Rather an awkward question of yours, Mary; how shall I answer it? Sometimes happy, and sometimes sad, oftener weeping, yet sometimes glad. There I have made a rhyme of it, you see, but really it is a most exact, true picture of the state of your poor mamma's feelings."

"Well, and then when Arthur came?"

"When Arthur came, your mamma told him you were up stairs, that you wanted to be quiet and alone for a little while, to which he of course quite agreed; and then as she began entrusting you and your happiness to his care in rather a pathetic manner, I thought it time to take my departure. You promised me one long conversation, too, before you went—don't you remember?"

"Yes, I did promise; I wanted to talk to you most particularly. Can't you guess about what, Amy?"

"No, Mary, I can't, indeed."

"Then I must tell you—about Ernest."

"Ernest!" exclaimed Amy, in a tone of surprise, then checking herself suddenly, she added, in a more subdued voice; "oh! yes, I think I know now what you mean, Mary."

"Well then, let me too hear the answer you will give him to-morrow, dear Amy. I am so anxious to know your decision."

Amy looked doubtfully round the dim little

room as if she half feared the walls had indeed ears, and would hear and understand the answer she was about to make, then throwing her arms round Mary's neck and hiding her blushing face on her bosom, she whispered:

"I—I have made up my mind to say yes, Mary, as he so much wishes it. Am I right?"

"Quite right, darling; I am so glad to hear it!"

And then ensued a long, earnest conversation, till Mary rose at last with a happy smile on her face, saying:

"Yes, well I shall hope now as you say that, though not present at mine, he may be at yours, dear Amy. Arthur's brother Edgar, too. Oh! how happy we shall all be!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Art is long, and time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating,
Funeral marches to the grave.

LONGFELLOW.

ONCE more we must turn to other places and other scenes, distant from those which we have just narrated.

The last glorious rays of the setting sun fell across the green lawn of an elegant little villa in the near neighbourhood of St. Albans, the bright and dark shadows chasing each other in rapid succession, and varying the bright tint of tree and flower, as over them passed

the alternate sunshine and shadow. A child's gay peals of laughter rang merrily through the adjoining shrubbery, and glimpses of two figures flitting hither and thither, as if in sport, might occasionally be seen through the green foliage of the surrounding trees.

At length, however, the sounds ceased, the heavy foliage was pushed aside, and Agnes Martin appeared, accompanied by the little Hugh.

"We can't play any longer now, darling, it is time to go in. Do you know whether Mr. Martin is returned yet?" she asked of the gardener, whom they encountered on their approach to the house.

"Not yet, ma'am."

"Then we will stay out a few minutes longer, my Hugh," and turning towards a rustic bower some paces from them, Agnes seated herself on a low seat, gazing admiringly on the fair scene before her.

"Is that Heaven, mamma?" said the child,

who had followed the direction of his mother's eyes, and now gazed wonderingly at the surpassing loveliness of the bright crimson tints, which tipped with gold, spread like a gorgeous far off mountain on the distant horizon.

"No, Hugh, that is not Heaven. Heaven is even a more beautiful place than that, my child. If you are a good boy, and love God, you will live there when you die."

"And you too, dear mamma," he said, in a half inquiring tone, "and papa?"

A shade passed over his mother's face as she answered:

"I hope so, darling."

Alas! where was her hope that her husband would be with them in their blest abode; how could she trust that he, who lived but for the world, would join them there! She rose hastily from her seat, a pang gnawing at her heart from the child's innocent words. She little thought how soon a far deeper, bitterer pang would be there, what a terrible trial

awaited her before the ending of that day. Once more with a restless anxiety she could not account for, and hardly owned to herself, she turned towards the house.

"Your master is unusually late, Thomas," she said, once more addressing the old gardener, "are you sure he has not come in by the west gate? It is long past his usual dinner hour."

"No, ma'am, I am sure he has not, or I must have seen him from here. But I am not so surprised at his not coming home exact to the time to-day. You know of course, ma'am, that he was going to have a sort of boat race on the river with some other gentlemen."

"No, Thomas, I did not;" and a slight flush passed over the young wife's cheek, at being thus obliged to own to a domestic that even he was more acquainted with her husband's movements and plans for the day than herself. "I did not know that there was anything unusual to detain him. Thank you," and

she was moving away, when with a sudden movement of horror and affright, the old servant seized her dress as if to detain her steps. His eyes had seen what hers had not—the opening of the side gate, men with awe struck faces advancing towards the house—an apparently lifeless form borne forward.

"Lady, lady—pray stop, for Heaven's sake! It will kill you! Oh! do not go!" he exclaimed, still grasping her dress with convulsive energy.

"Thomas, this strange, this unaccountable conduct—why?" then seeing his eyes still gazing intently towards one particular spot, she broke from his hold, in another instant had turned the corner, and stood transfixed gazing on the scene before her.

There was a low murmur of voices, but she heard it not; there were other faces, servants, strangers, but she saw them, heeded them not. One face—from which the covering had fallen aside, with features stiffened and ghastly, hair

all wet and dripping; one form as it was borne through the opened doors, and disappeared from her sight, stood out vividly from all the rest. The face of the Edward she had once loved so passionately, who was still dear to her heart as the father of her boy. There was no sound of horror, no scream of despair: —her senses seemed to have deserted her.

One moment she stood thus, and then the arms sank nervelessly down, the head drooped, and she fell to the ground insensible.

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"Take me to mamma—I want to go to mamma," said the piteous voice of little Hugh, who had made his way to the hall, and stood gazing in wondering affright at the many new and strange faces which surrounded him. "What do you want, so many people here in papa's house? I shall go and tell mamma."

"No, no, Master Hugh, come with me,"

and one of the servants advanced towards him, taking the little hand in hers. "Your mamma is upstairs; she is ill, and you cannot see her now, but she will soon be better, come along, dear."

The poor child gazed up into her face with a look of wondering surprise.

"No, she is not ill. She was with me in the garden just now; she is well, it is not true," and as the maid half led, half dragged him up the stairs, he still kept up the one continued cry, "Mamma, where are you? Hugh wants you, dear mamma."

The child's cries were heard by other ears, for the door of Agnes's room was suddenly opened, and a gentleman appeared on the threshold.

"Give me the child, quick," he said. "It is just what we want to rouse her," and taking the astonished boy gently by the hand, he led him forward into the apartment. Stretched on the sofa, recovered from the deadly swoon in

which they had found her, yet still seeming half stunned and unconscious of all around, lay Agnes, her eyes wandering vacantly from face to face, as if questioning the reality of the scene before her. But as they fell on the little tearful face, the bright blue eyes which gazed on her with such a look of terror and dismay, she opened her arms, murmuring faintly:

"My Hugh, my precious one!"

They placed him by her side, and as she pressed him fondly to her bosom, a gush of passionate tears burst forth; then turning a wild look of enquiry on the doctor, she gasped forth the words:

"The truth, the truth, you know what I mean; oh! tell me quickly."

The doctor saw at a glance that there must be no tampering, no concealment with that agonised heart, and with mournful emphasis, he answered simply:

"You already know the truth, my poor young lady."

He felt that at that moment words added of sympathy and condolence from a stranger's lips would fall almost mockingly on the ear of her they were intended to soothe. Yes, it was indeed a dark, terrible abyss into which Agnes gazed with affrighted eyes! Where was the soul, thus suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to appear before its Maker and its God; whither had that departed spirit flown? Should they, united by the most solemn bonds in this world, be re-united or severed for ever in the world to come? Awful, momentous question, who could answer it! In that last dread moment had a prayer arisen for pardon for his life-long forgetfulness of God, had that prayer, if it had ascended, been received at the Throne of Grace? Ah! terrible pang of all, the doubt which would arise as to the eternal welfare of his immortal soul.

Are there not many deaths even as sudden and unexpected as that of Edward Martin? and yet how does the world go on in its fancied security, each thinking that he is safe,

that death is still to him a far off messenger; that there is ample time to think of religion, ample time to repent. So he had thought, as with his heart filled with thoughts of the world and its pleasures, he had left his home that day, little dreaming that ere the night fell, he would be brought back to it a corpse.

In passing too suddenly a difficult and dangerous point of the river, the boat, containing himself and two of his companions, had overturned. The latter had been quickly rescued. Swimming towards a boat but a short distance in the rear, they were released almost immediately from their unpleasant situation. Not so the unfortunate Martin. Becoming entangled in some weeds at the bottom of the river, all his attempts to swim proved fruitless, and he had exhausted his strength in his ineffectual efforts. By the time assistance came, it was too late. All attempts to restore him to consciousness were in vain; the heart had ceased to beat, and life had fled for ever. And thus he was borne to his home; the form

but a few short minutes back full of vigor and strength, now an inanimate, lifeless corpse; the proud heart once so absorbed in earth and its vanities, now stilled for ever. One more added to the many startling warnings daily given of the uncertainty of life; one more event to be talked of, commented on by the world, and then forgotten.

CHAPTER XX.

This is the place. Stand still, my steed,
Let me review the scene,
And summon from the shadowy past
The forms that once have been.

LONGFELLOW.

IT was towards the close of the year 1859 that two horsemen might have been seen taking their way along the high road leading to St. Albans. The taller of the two, who, judging from his appearance, was the senior by some ten years of his companion, gazed around him from time to time, as they advanced, with the eye of one to whom the scene was a new and

strange one, awakening but a passing feeling of curiosity, and rousing no deeper emotions in his breast.

Not so the younger traveller. His cheek flushed and his lip quivered as his eyes rested on places and objects that were to him evidently well-known and familiar.

"We are nearing the town," he said, at length, in a low voice of suppressed emotion. "Oh! Edgar, how thankful ought I to be that I am thus permitted after all to see my home again."

"I can well understand your feelings, dear Graham," answered the other, "for though not returning like you to the home of my childhood, I shall, I trust, soon meet a brother long separated, yet ever dear, of whom I have often thought, often prayed, during the long years of my exile from my native land. There is a strange bond of sympathy between us two," he added, with a deep sigh. "We each have to atone for the dark past; each have

now to commence, as it were, a new life, nobler, better than before."

"May it indeed prove so!" said his companion, earnestly. "When last I trod this road, Edgar, I was but a boy. Now I am a man, not so much in years, as in bitter, sad experience, such as few have gained. Where are my visions of honour and fame? Visions I may well call them," he added, in a bitter tone of mingled irony and sorrow. "I return a beggar to my native land, penniless as I departed. How have I wasted those three years which might have been the commencement of a prosperous career."

"Now hold, hold, Archie," said the other, soothingly. "How often have you told me you considered me even as a brother! Let us not be so only in name; dear boy, henceforth all that I have must be shared with you. 'No.' I will not have a no, so hold your peace, and see, here we are so near now to the

end of our journey. Oh! let us cast all sad thoughts away, Archie, for we shall soon see our beloved ones."

Inver House, which in the commencement of our story we described as being the residence of Mr. Graham, stood rather apart by the roadside, at the beginning of the town of St. Albans. Our travellers halted as they neared this spot.

"Ah! what recollections does the sight of this house bring to my mind," said the younger, sadly. "I am glad, though that Mary should have thought of returning to the old home where we were once so happy."

"And where, please God, you will yet again be as happy as before," said the other, gently, as dismounting from his horse, he proceeded to fasten the reins to the adjoining gate.

"Come, Graham."

As they advanced towards the house, both glanced up eagerly at the different windows,

but there were no signs of their approach having been observed.

"We are not expected yet," said Edgar; "I said we should be late. What a surprise it will be for them, Archie."

Hardly, however, had the words escaped his lips ere the door was thrown open, and a young lady, to them a stranger, appeared on the threshold.

"Ernest, Arthur, they are come—they are come!" she exclaimed, in a tone of delighted surprise.

In another instant a tall figure stood by her side, and with a glad cry of "Arthur, Arthur!" Edgar sprang forward, and the long-separated brothers were once more locked in a fond embrace.

Ah! who shall describe the joy of that meeting with the long lost, when Mary once more clasped to the breast of her beloved Archie, wept tears of joy and thankfulness for his return, when kneeling at his mother's feet as in days long past, the now manly head

bowed low, he murmured forth his deep contrition for having so wounded and grieved that loving mother's heart, and told her how earnestly he had resolved henceforth to bring comfort, and not sorrow, to her declining years. And as she parted the dark curls from his manly brow, and gazed on the loved features, which she had so longed to see again, how did her heart overflow with thankfulness to Him, who had heard and answered her prayers, who had restored her erring, but now repentant child, to his home and friends.

With glistening eyes did the little group around watch that happy reunion of mother and child, till with a sigh, almost groan, Edgar turned away, murmuring:

"Ah! happy, happy boy! He has a mother to welcome his return, to tell him of her love, her forgiveness of the past, whilst I—alas! but for me, she too might have lived. Arthur, Arthur, how can *I* ever atone for the past?"

"My brother, though not here on this

earth to welcome your return, her happy spirit sees and blesses the reunion of her children. Her last thoughts, her last words were of you, Edgar. I believe—I am sure, that at that moment you were far dearer to her heart than I, for the very reason that you were in disgrace and misery, for the very reason that she knew you would ever reproach yourself as the cause of her death. And oh! Edgar, do you wish to recall her to this world of sin and suffering? Is she not happier far than any here; however great our joy, can it for one moment be compared with hers?"

"Arthur, this sweet peace and resignation, these blessed hopes—ah! give me them too, my brother. I have long felt that religion alone could soothe the agony of my wounded heart. But I am so ignorant, have so much to learn. You will teach me, Arthur, lead me into the right way, and then, like you, I shall be able to look forward to our meeting in Heaven, and thus feel more resigned to her loss whilst here on earth."

"What happiness, Edgar, to hear you say these words. Together, my beloved brother, we will strive to subdue the evil in our hearts and lives, together learn those blessed precepts which will guide us on our way to everlasting life."

And with a warm pressure of the hand, the holy compact between the twin brothers was sealed for evermore.

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"And now, Archie," said Ernest, as the first joy and confusion over, he led Amy forward, "I must introduce to you one very dear to us all, with whom you have yet to make your acquaintance. This is my Amy."

"Ah! Ernest, I was so glad to hear of your happiness," and pressing his lips to Amy's fair cheek, "I am delighted to welcome such a dear sister among us."

"There is one more introduction to be gone through yet," said Ernest, smiling. "How

did you like the news you received of your having attained to the dignity of uncle since your departure? There," pointing to a merry little urchin of about two years old, who, half hidden by the partly closed door, was bashfully contemplating the newly arrived visitors, "there is Master Ernest Graham the second. Is he not a darling?" he added, as with all a young father's pride he drew the child forward for the inspection of his new uncle.

With his bright dark eyes, and rosy dimpled face, the little Ernest certainly did form a very pretty picture, as clinging shyly to his father's hand, he looked up archly through his dark curls at the strange visitor.

"Ah! Ernest, can it really be? What changes!" exclaimed Archie, glancing from the bright beautiful boy to the sweet face of the young mother by his side, "you must indeed be happy now."

"Happier than I deserve to be, dear Archie. But I trust that the trouble and sorrow which

for a time overshadowed our lives, has served to render us all more patient and trusting than before. How strangely have all things worked together for our good in the end? When we murmured and complained over the darkness of our lot, and as sorrow upon sorrow came upon us, felt well nigh tempted to despair, His goodness was still directing all things, mercifully granting us at last the petitions which might well have been denied to our murmuring, thankless hearts."

"Yes indeed, Ernest, and like you I feel that it is good for me to have been in trouble, to have suffered and felt the consequences of my rash folly. I trust now (but no longer in my own strength), to begin life afresh, and show you that the bitter lesson I have had has not—can never be—forgotten. And now, my dear brother, tell me of your own prospects. Did you obtain the living you mentioned in your last letter as being in hopes of?"

"I did. You must go back with us, Archie,

and see our new home; a very pretty little country parsonage, I can assure you. We came up here to Arthur and Mary, that we might all be here to meet you on your return. Does it not seem nice to be once more all together in the old home?"

"Ah! yes," and Archie glanced round the room with a half sigh; "how much we have all gone through since those happy days when our poor father was with us! Well, please God, we may now have them over again."

"Yes, we will have a merry, merry Christmas," said Ernest, holding up his boy on high and gazing fondly on the bright beaming little face, "won't we, my pet! Ah! Archie, when first I gazed on the features of my boy, I prayed that ere long your eyes might rest on them too, and then as the months went by and our hopes grew fainter and fainter, we used to try to trace in him some resemblance to you. But there, that sorrowful time is now

past; we have you yourself, and we will be happy and thankful as we ought to be."

And very happy they were on that first delightful evening of reunion, very thankful were the hearts which sent up their fervent prayers to Heaven, now once more an unbroken family circle—once more kneeling together as in former years!

"Ah! Arthur," said Mary, as together they talked over the events of that happy day, "what great, unmerited blessings have been showered upon us! Does not our joy seem all the greater that we have had sorrow and trials? Whatever griefs may be in store for us in after years, we have, I hope, learnt to bear them with more patience, knowing that they are sent us for some wise purpose, and that if we do but do our duty through all, and still trust in Him, we shall most surely be comforted and rewarded at last.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

It was long ere Agnes Martin recovered from the severe shock of her husband's sudden death. Gradually, however, peace and tranquillity were restored to her troubled mind, and though few would have recognized in her the light-hearted, happy Agnes Leslie of former years, there was something irresistibly winning in the more subdued expression of her young face: the tempered, sobered look of one who had known much change and sorrow, yet still with trusting love and resignation, rose strong

above every trial secure in her faith and trust in One above who would ever shield her with his love and care.

She devoted herself entirely to her little Hugh, and stronger and deeper even than before was the love between the mother and child. They were now everything to each other. The only dear one left to her on earth —all Agnes's hopes for the future were centred in him, for him she roused herself from melancholy brooding over the past. The happiness of his young life must not be overshadowed with gloom. Tears must not in early life dim his bright eyes. All too soon she knew would the time come in after years when he must know sorrow and change; when no effort of hers could save, no smiles of hers chase away the gloom from his heart and brow—but ah! whilst she could render his life happy, whilst she could see his face beaming with sunny smiles of innocent happiness, not through her should one bright smile be chased away, not

for her one tear be shed to darken the joyousness of his young happy heart.

And thus in the effort to regain cheerfulness for the sake of her child, that effort brought its own reward. Peace did indeed return, and gradually the wound in her heart was healed.

By one of those strange coincidences, incidents apparently trivial and unimportant, yet changing sometimes the whole course of our after life, Agnes became acquainted about this time with Mary Graham, now Mary Mainwaring. They met at the house of a mutual friend, and Mary having heard of the sudden unexpected death of her former lover, felt a deep interest and sympathy for the poor young widow, whom she had last seen under such different circumstances, bright and happy in the bloom of youth and beauty, with apparently not a care or sorrow to disturb her peace. The intimacy soon ripened into friendship, and ere long the two once, (though Agnes knew it not) rivals for the love of him who had then been

equally dear to both their hearts, became firmly attached friends; and very many pleasant hours were spent by Agnes and her boy amongst the happy family circle at Inver House. And after a time these visits became more and more frequent, and the little Hugh would talk almost incessantly of his new friend, "dear Mr. Edgar, who was always so kind to Hugh;" whilst Agnes would listen to those artless praises with a deeper glow than usual mounting on her cheek, and a strange thoughtful look in her soft eyes, as if the little speaker's loving words found a responsive echo in her own bosom. Often too would she ask with a peculiar earnestness of look and voice—

"Then you love him, my darling; you do indeed love Mr. Edgar?"

And as the answer came, always the same:

"Oh! yes dear mamma, he is good, he is kind to Hugh. Hugh loves him very much,"

A glad smile would appear on her face, and

folding him tighter in her arms, she whispered—

"And you may love him always, my pet. He is very good indeed, and will teach my Hugh to be good too."

What need for farther explanation. Agnes Martin became after a time the happy wife of Edgar Mainwaring, and great was the joy of Arthur and Mary at a union which promised so fair for the happiness of both parties. Not without much serious thought and prayer had Agnes resolved at last to yield to the persuasions of that earnest voice, and to the pleadings of her own heart, which spoke so loudly in favor of his goodness and worth.

Her beloved Hugh was her first consideration, his happiness must be her chief care. But when she saw his evident attachment to his new friend, when she marked the extreme (and as she knew it to be) real, unfeigned tenderness of Edgar's manner towards him, she thought what a blessing it would be for him

to have such a protector ever by his side, to watch over him with fatherly solicitude and care. And thus once more did she stand at the altar, once more repeat that solemn promise to love, honor, and obey him who stood by her side—Edgar, the so long wandering, homeless exile, now so rich in the love of two fond hearts, to whom he was henceforth to be all in all.

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And thus, reader, will we now leave those, whose troubles and trials have formed the subject of these pages.

Many are there like them, who unexpectedly overwhelmed with hard and bitter trials, see no hope in the sudden darkness which seems closing around them, and all their dearest, fondest hopes of happiness. Yet, after a time light comes in the midst of all, a light which shows them that the very things which they once thought so hard to bear, have really been

blessings in disguise, bringing joy instead of mourning, and changing their tears into glad smiles of happiness. However dark our fate and sad our lot, let us endure our sorrows with patience, and, like Mary, look upwards for health and strength in our time of trouble.

Take courage, all that are weary and sick-hearted, who feel well nigh inclined to murmur at the hardness of your lot. Take heart. It will not be ever thus, you will not be tried above that you are able to bear. Still continue steadfast in Hope and Faith, and in due time you will be rewarded. "Never despair."

THE END.

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